SLAVES OF THE GODS

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by

KATHERINE MAYO

author of Mother India





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We have a splendid spiritual heritage; but it has grown stale and profitless through the lack of the one thing which alone can keep any tradition fresh and profitable; and that is the spirit of real affection and consideration for others. The most potent survivals from our immemorial past are now—what? Crystallized cruelties and selfishness, infant marriage, the heartless restrictions which we place on widows, our treatment of women generally, the whole system of untouchability, what are these but matters in which the dead weight of custom has crushed out of us the ordinary decent feelings which should sweeten and harmonize the life of human beings? And what is caste itself but a system of organized selfishness. . . . These and many similar things, are our heritage today; and it is under the weight of this heritage that we are groaning.—KRISHNAMURTI. Reprinted in Madras, *New India* [Editors, Annie Besant and B. Shiva Rao], March 22, 1928.

The author acknowledges with appreciation the courtesy of the Editor of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in permitting the inclusion, in this volume, of five narratives published in that magazine during 1928-29.

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TO THE WESTERN WORLD

Beyond the windows, English lawn, deep, soft and living green. Beyond the lawn a butter-cup meadow—one rolling sheet of gold shining up to the sun. Around, a wood of ancient beeches threaded by a disused Roman by-road moss-dimmed and plumed with fern. Above, a pale blue sky traversed by bright-sailed fleets of clouds.

Within the room, somehow, an almost tangible happiness—as if many generations, bred here in one mind, had made it through life the haven of their thought. A haunted room—haunted with peace as definitely as it is filled with sunshine and the stir of summer breezes.

The walls and woodwork are all dead-white. But here and there stand pots of Canterbury bells, spreading purple against the whiteness. In a low arm-chair sits the master of the house—his ruddy face alight with vitality, humour, and character. His snow-white hair makes a nimbus around his

head. His purple robe unites with the flowers behind him. Close on his either side sits a German police-dog. At his feet lies a tangle of Irish terrier puppies, asleep.

"These are my Untouchables," he says with a smile, as he drops his arms across the big dogs' shoulders. And the big dogs press their heads against his neck.

This is the Right Reverend Henry Whitehead, for twenty-three years Lord Bishop of the great Indian diocese of Madras. Lately retired from that bishopric, he is still actively engaged in work for the peoples of India, and more particularly for the Untouchables in their multi-millions.

We had been discussing *Mother India.* In the course of that discussion, the Bishop made a criticism of the book and used an illustration—the same criticism, the same illustration that he had previously used in a London meeting.

"Would you care, sir," I now asked, "to let me have that statement in writing, for publication?"

In response came the following letter. I cannot, I believe, do better than use it in the forefront of this book.

Sulham House, Pangbourne,
June 2nd, 1928.

DEAR MISS MAYO,

May I state the impression that the book [*Mother India*] has left on my own mind? It did not tell me anything new. During the time of my service in India, close on forty years, I came to know of all the moral and social evils that you describe: most of them have been discussed publicly in India during the last sixty or seventy years, and efforts have been made by a series of earnest and able social reformers, both Indian and European, to find a remedy for them, though with singularly little success.

But *Mother India* did disquiet my conscience. It compelled me to ask whether I ought not to have made far more effort to awaken the Hindus, to whom I was sent, to the cruelty and inhumanity which those evils involve.

The view I took was that the evils you describe are deeply rooted in the Hindu religion, and that my business as a Christian Missionary was to lay the axe to the root of the tree rather than to deal with the fruits. But I am not sure that I was right. S. John Baptist's call to repentance came before the preaching of the Kingdom of God.

If I may venture to make one small criticism of your book, it is that, though the connection of the evils you describe with Hindu religious ideas is mentioned, it might be more strongly emphasized.

It is this religious sanction that has made the efforts, often the splendid and courageous efforts, of Indian social reformers so ineffective.

Take the case of sexual immorality. I do not think that the peoples of the West are by nature purer than the peoples of India. But we in the West have the inestimable advantage of a religion that stands for purity and righteousness.

Try to imagine what London would be like if in S. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and other leading churches large establishments of prostitutes had been kept for centuries past for the use of the clergy and worshippers. What chance would reformers have of raising or even maintaining the standard of sexual morality?

Yet that would be parallel to the state of affairs actually existing in South India where the *Deva-dasis*, women and little children married to the god and maintained as prostitutes, have for many centuries been kept in the large temples. You have described the system in one of the chapters

of your book and your description is painfully true. It is the consecration of immorality by the sanction of religion.

I have often been asked by people who have read your book, "What can be done?" "Is there no remedy?" Taken by itself the book leaves an impression of hopeless pessimism, which I do not share. The splendid work of the Christian Church for the last seventy years in raising up hundreds of thousands of the poor untouchable outcastes, whose miserable lot you so feelingly describe, from the lowest depths of oppression and degradation and setting them on the upward path towards a higher and happier life is a bright spot of sunshine in what is otherwise a picture of darkness and despair. What Christ has done and is doing for the outcastes, He can do for all. The one hope of India is in His Gospel of power and love.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) HENRY WHITEHEAD

Bishop.

I accept the Bishop's criticism; adding that if there were still more emissaries of the Christian religion who displayed his undivided purpose, his

brilliant carelessness of the possible personal consequences of loyalty to his colours, his certainty of the supreme value of the faith he declares, the definite harvest of Christianity in India might not be so largely limited to the outcaste.

Accepting, then, the Bishop's criticism, I take this opportunity to redeclare and more strongly to emphasize a point repeatedly either made or implied in the pages of *Mother India.*

That point is:

The large majority of the inhabitants of British India is Hindu. The large majority of that majority adheres to the orthodox Hindu creed. To the influence or the dictates of the current orthodox Hindu creed are directly traceable the most devastating evils that today prey upon the Hindu world.

Examples of degenerate crime, examples of cruelties and abuses suggestive of Hindu India's worst, may, it is true, be found today amongst our own people. But they will not be found either commanded or sanctioned by any form of the Christian religion; neither are they upheld, defended, excused nor denied by our public conscience or by the leaders of our people.

That eminent Hindu, Sir Surendranath Banerjea, writing four years ago, declared:[1]

> It is useless to disguise the fact that the social problem in India is weighted with issues of unusual difficulty and complexity. You cannot think of a social question affecting the Hindu community that is not bound up with religious considerations; . . . thus the social reformer in India has to fight against forces believed to be semi-divine in their character, and more or less invulnerable against the commonplace and mundane weapons of expediency and common sense.

Those curious in the matter may find much of interest in recent debates on Child Marriage in the Central Indian Legislature, where, on the one hand, Hindu members freely acknowledge the spreading decadence of the Hindu peoples and their progressive suicide through child marriage; yet, on the other hand, declare the immense difficulty, religious or semi-religious in nature, of any rapid weaning of Hindu orthodoxy from that practice.

[1] *A Nation in Making*. Humphrey Milford, London, 1925. P. 396.

That the more glaring social evils inherent in Hinduism have during the past eighteen months increasingly engaged the attention and received the acknowledgment of educated India is indisputable. That this phenomenon is largely the effect of American and European public opinion suddenly concentrated on practical aspects of Hindu life, is also indisputable.

That the impact of alert Western scrutiny has been painfully unwelcome to the Hindu political leader, driving him to extreme expedients to divert that scrutiny from its concrete object, is a third actuality; for the politician finds himself embarrassed thereby in his demand that he and his ancient system be acclaimed with praise by our young Western world. But, on the other hand, the single-purposed and personally ambitionless Hindu social reformer—and such, indeed, exist—knows that never in all its history has his cause received such aid and impetus as today it receives through the awakened critical attention of the West.

So definitely is this true, that to diminish, befog or distract that critical attention were, at the present juncture, to enter into collusion with the entrenched forces inimical to the progress of the Hindu peoples.

While such things as consummated child marriage and the degradation of women; as enforced widowhood and the persecution of widows; as temple prostitution, untouchability, and cruelty to dumb animals, remain integral parts of the effective Hindu code, nothing but progressive decay can await the followers of that code no matter what higher and better things may also be adduced concerning it.

The twelve narratives composing this book are not fiction, although cast in fiction form. They are episodes taken from real life. In each case they rest upon the direct, firsthand and authoritative evidence of living persons. They belong to the present, not to the past, and each little drama represents thousands of others today being lived in Hindu India. Their form is determined by the facts as they occurred, not by any rule of literary art. Their sole purpose is to re-state some of the main points developed in *Mother India*—to re-emphasize by specific examples the general nature of the disease, not political but social and religious, that saps the life of Hinduism at its source.

Those of the twelve that relate to lives of women are not all-inclusively typical, for none of them will be found paralleled in the many

Hindu families governed today by a more enlightened spirit. But of the great mass of the Hindu majority, high or low, rich or poor, these records are typical; for although the incident described may be illustrative of tendencies or practices found only in certain areas or among certain classes, the underlying bed-rock of ignorance, cruelty, callousness and pain remains characteristic of all.

To borrow the motto of a recent Hindu writer,[2] "I have set forth the shadows alone, as my object is not to flatter men but to awaken the social conscience."

Without departure from truth this book might have been lightened by narratives showing happy graces. But unnumbered writers have occupied themselves with that agreeable task; great and varied is the bibliography of Hinduism's idealistic beauties. Is the space of a second small volume, then, too much to allot to a few of its mortal woes?

[2] N. Yagnesvara Sastry, B.Sc., B.L. "The Tragedy of Women's Life in India," *Stri-Dharma*, Madras, July, 1928. *Stri-Dharma* is the official organ of the Women's Indian Association, Dr. Annie Besant, President.

KINDLY FLAMES

There is no Hindu who does not know [what widowhood means] from practical experience in his own household. It is a life of agony, pains and suffering and austerity.—KUMAR GANGANAND SINHA. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4414.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

"Give me a child's first seven years," say the wise men, "and I will fix its character forever."

Does that explain Kamla Devi?

Kamla Devi was born in the Northern Punjab, where the very air makes men. Further, her village, because of the Deputy Commissioner Sahib, backing the inexplicable fancies of its army-trained Muslim chief, was commonly healthy and cleanish. Further still, Hindu though she was, Kamla Devi, ugly, wiry, laughing little imp, played all day long with sturdy Muslim youngsters under the open sky; so that the strength of the Punjab sun and air struck deep, deep down into her body and mind.

"She is like a boy. Her merry heart lightens my days," said her father often, "wherefore may the gods grant we keep her to the very limit of her time!"

And as often the mother replied: "May the gods in their mercy so grant it, O Lord of my life."

Before Kamla Devi's second birthday, her father, a prosperous Hindu farmer, had arranged her marriage. This in the greater haste because the region was not Hindu, but Muslim, making families of his caste marriage-circle so far to seek as to involve the possible damnation of his soul—a thing bound to occur should he fail properly to marry his daughter. For the same reason he had been forced to a match inferior in all but caste—the one inflexible requirement.

Then, in profound relief, he had put disturbing facts from him and had settled down to the luxury of utterly loving his pet while yet he might, giving her all that he could of freedom and special indulgence. "I may keep her till her twelfth year," he thought—and would think no further.

But Kamla Devi was not quite eight years old on the day when her childhood ended.

"The health of her husband requires her. Let her therefore forthwith be sent to him," quoth the messenger, while little Kamla Devi, all unconscious, shouted with her playmates in the sun.

That was the last play-hour of her life.

"Must it be—and she so wee—such a baby yet!" wailed the mother.

"Peace, fool!" growled the farmer. "Doth not her lord call? Is our daughter to blacken our faces with shame?"

So followed the farewells—the shrieks and tears of the mother, the father's violent grief, and the long journey south.

But the use of her clean child-body did not arrest her husband's fate, for all the promise of the ancient code. Within a week he lay dead—and Kamla Devi entered upon the life of a widow in a Hindu joint-family house.

Much might be said of the nature and effect of the Hindu joint-family system, whereby generations of descent, direct and collateral, live under one roof. For Kamla Devi, eight years old, the effect was this: To make her the butt and slave of seventeen relatives-in-law and in especial of the indoor ruler, her late husband's mother.

"Devil! Monster! Blight-faced spawn of Hell!" the old woman would scream. "But for your sins my son would yet be here in the pride of his manhood! How, but for your crimes in a hundred past lives of crime, could such a son die! Curses be upon you forever! May your vile body be eaten alive and your soul descend into a blind maggot. May—"

Or, when breath failed her, the others took up the effort, till no unsayable thing had been left unsaid nor any fantastic evil unpictured. With such words they drove her to the dirtiest, most tiresome tasks. With such words they salted the scant, hard food that makes the Hindu widow's fare.

When she would have crept in amongst them to witness from some dark corner their household pleasures, they chased her away, in unfeigned terror of her "evil eye." And when, in loneliness and misery, exhaustion and inward revolt, she, child of love, sobbed herself to sleep, they awakened her with blows, to assign new labours and to rail at her ugly face.

Yet, as time passed, Kamla Devi not only survived—as millions of Hindu widows, serfs and "sinners" all, survive—but somehow maintained the secret freedom of her soul. Somehow, too, in spite of starvation and drudgery, shed her physical chrysalis until, when her twelfth year brought achieved womanhood, only hatred could fail to see the comeliness of her face.

And then it was that real trouble unfolded; Kishan, her husband's eldest brother, perceived her new beauty with the eye of desire. According

to the custom of the caste, a deceased man's brother may claim the widow in marriage. And Kishan demanded that Kamla Devi become his personal slave and his wife.

Now Kishan was an evil, dirty, foul old man, broken by disease, and Kamla Devi's very marrow recoiled from the thought of his touch. Yet the whole family, turning in a pack, now hounded her to consent. The reproach of widowhood would thus be removed from her—so they reiterated, hour by hour; and she, without further expense to their purse, could produce for them legitimate children. Hour by hour, night and day, they harried her, while Kishan pressed his sickening suit.

"I will throw myself down the well!" one day she cried in open rebellion, thinking of the Hindu girl-suicide's most frequent recourse.

"Come here!" called the mother-in-law from her place beside the fire. "Take that!" And, seizing the child's hand, she thrust it into the boiling rice. "Let that teach you to talk of drowning yourself, dearly as you'd love to spoil our water and rob us of your work!

"Assuredly you are possessed of a demon. Assuredly the Muslim fry you were bred with have rotted your soul, for no honest Hindu widow had

ever such obstinacy as yours!" the old woman railed on. "As for the escape of death, never dream of it! Are its doors not guarded by our eyes?"

Well Kamla Devi knew the truth of the words. Never for a moment, now that the family felt the need of vigilance, could she elude their sight. Yet she terribly feared to live, lest in the end their ceaseless clamour should break down her will, and deliver her into the clutch of the unspeakable Kishan.

Now, her right hand blistered from its plunge in the boiling pot, she crept back to her morning's task of moulding cow-dung cakes and sticking them to dry on the wall around the courtyard gate. In rows they clung there already, as high as she could reach to affix them, hundreds on hundreds of cakes each bearing the imprint of her tiny hand. And yet a heap of dung remained. As in a dream, she worked on.

Presently through the dream shot jagged words: ". . . Suttee. In the Golden Age, before the British came, our Hindu women were brave and pure of spirit. Queen or peasant, joyously they gave their lives on their husbands' funeral pyres,

passing triumphant through the fiery portal to another life. But now the British, in their diabolical hatred of us and our ancient culture, have snatched from our women that holy privilege.

"O Hindu widows, daughters of a thousand sorrows, your departed lords and masters in their present state, be that what it may, know full well that they were happier, higher, far, had you not neglected the glorious rite. But you, alas! have fallen victim to our Oppressor.

"You, once so strong and proud, are now grown soft and poor of spirit. No longer have you the courage to serve your lords to the end. No longer have you the virtue that, in one splendid act, glorifies and exalts all your lord's family with surpassing merit and fame. The British in their jealousy have debased your souls. The Golden Age is past!—is past!"

The singsong voice trailed on—the voice of the scholar of the household, reading from some political hand-bill. Kamla Devi stole a glance that way. Enmeshed by the words, the whole family had assembled in the courtyard. But every creature's eyes were fixed on the reader's lips. For once they had forgotten her!

Silent as a shadow, Kamla Devi, on her little bare feet, slipped out through the courtyard gate.

Time passed, filled with hue and cry and searchings. But at noon the child reappeared of herself and stood before them all.

"I have been to the river. I have duly bathed, in such form as the law commands"—the words came not as a child speaks, but dully, impersonally, as if from the dead. "Before this sundown I shall be suttee. To the holy gods I have vowed it."

Instinctively the household turned to its head. The old woman, tense as a drawn bow, crouched for a moment at gaze; then, darting forward, seized hold upon the child, peering down into her great dark eyes. Long and fiercely she sought, as one who tests the inmost fibre. At last, with a cry of supreme exultation she threw her arms aloft.

"Blessed be this Day of Days, that restores to my son his bride! Blessed be this Day of Days, that confers high honour upon all my family! Blessed be this Day of Days, that exalts me among all women, for a suttee shall be done to the glory of our house!"

"Will the girl hold firm?" asked the younger women, breathless.

"She will hold firm!" the Old One answered. "Have I not read the soul behind her eyes?"

At once the whole household gave way to excitement, pride, rejoicing, and to preparation for the event. Running to the bazaar and spreading the news as they ran, they bought *mashru*, their ceremonial cloth of silk and cotton mixed, to enwrap the little victim. Next, having decked her with the jewels she had never worn since her husband's death, plus all the family store, again they rushed forth, busy as swarming bees, to borrow still more finery, tinsel, silver, gold, of neighbours all proud to aid so noble a spectacle. At last when sheer weight of metal had rendered her powerless to move, raising the child in their arms, they implanted her in an open palanquin.

There, gorgeous and impassive as a temple idol, she sat enthroned while, seizing the poles, with rhythmic tread the bearers began the procession.

Chanting prayers, beating drums, playing instruments, shouting inarticulate exultations, the village came trooping after.

But first behind the palanquin came a bullock-cart, well-laden.

"Not to the Burning Ghat!" the Old One had ordained. "That were too exposed. We might be

perceived by some Sahib. To the Garden of the Two Wells."

So on they swung, through lush, deep fields, through great fruit groves and away by swamps and reedy places, till they came at last to a solid wall of trees full sixty feet in height.

In the midst of the wall hid a gateway opening upon an ancient garden. And in that garden were neither flowers nor ordered planting, but only a tangle of neglected fruit trees and of snarled and mouldy wild growth, on all four sides encompassed by the towering wall of green.

Entering, with songs and shouting they moved toward a dense-topped, wide-armed tree whose shade had kept clear the ground beneath.

There, discharging from the cart its burden of cow-dung cakes—of which each bore the imprint of a little hand—they laid the cakes close together in rows upon the ground, scant five feet one way, scant three feet the other, heaping them up till the bed sufficed.

Finally, lifting little Kamla Devi from her palanquin, stripping her jewels and her fine clothes from her, they stretched her on the sacrificial bed.

Motionless she lay—motionless and silent as stone, while they heaped her body high with dung cakes, leaving exposed only her face and her right hand. Then, all being ready, they thrust a wisp of straw into those blistered fingers, and set the straw ablaze.

The tiny fingers clenched—that was all—till the straw fell away in dust.

But those who, being strongest and tallest, had fought their way close to the pyre, enjoyed the greatest thrill. For they saw the big eyes open wide while the lips framed the signal of command—saw the priests swing high their vessels of kerosene and *ghee* and empty them over the high-heaped dung—saw the torch applied.

Then, with the uprush of smoke and flames, arose such a babel of rejoicing shouts, such a clamour of instruments, such a beating of drums, as must drown any cry, however sharp, that agony might wring from the lips of a little child.

" 'Why did I allow it?' " the village head man protested, when the awkward facts came out. "Let the Sahib not be wroth. Of a truth there *is* an order, forbidding suttee. But this woman was not

of my village. She came from afar. It was therefore no business of mine—merely a matter of the private hearth.

"Still, for our Hindu people it was surely a great and most holy festival, and for our village an honour, now too rare, that abideth forever, blessed of the gods."

As the Hindu law allows polygamy, the parent of the girl dare not refuse to send the girl to her husband's house when he demands her for fear that the boy may be remarried.—DR. [MRS.] S. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDI,[1] *Proceedings*, Madras Legislative Council, March 27, 1928. P. 43.

. . . the chief obstacle to women's education in India at the present day is the custom of early marriage. This custom has also operated most harmfully in a number of other ways: To it is directly due the existence of a large and unhappy class of young widows, constituting a blot on our civilization; . . .—SRIMATI PARVATI CHANDRASEKHARA AIYAR.[2] *Stri-Dharma*, August, 1927. P. 149.

It is again authoritatively stated hereby that the bill [to regulate Hindu Child Marriage, debated

[1] This lady, the first to sit in an Indian legislature, has been elected Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council. She is a successful medical practitioner, and a devoted social worker.

[2] First woman member of the Bangalore District Council. Wife of the ex-Chief Justice of Mysore.

in the Indian Legislature in September, 1927] is in direct opposition to the sacred principles of Hindu religion practised by the orthodox Brahmin community from time immemorial. . . . Such a violation of sacred principles ought not on any ground to be tolerated.—Official Pronouncement of February 15, 1928, from "His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal Muth Kumbakonam —the Premier Religious Institution representing orthodox Hindu India."

Most of our intellectual men, and especially the orthodox communities, are against this Bill. They quote the "Shastra" and prove that it is a religious mandate. They also impute that girls can only be kept "chaste" if they are married early.— MRS. P. K. ROY. Address to the Bengal Presidency Council of Women. Calcutta [Weekly] *Statesman*, July 26, 1928.

The All India Brahmin Conference held at Benares in the first week of November . . . was attended by as many as 3000 Pandits and Shastris from all parts of India, and some of the seventeen resolutions in sonorous Sanskrit adopted by it are quite noteworthy: e.g., 1 and 3—Girls must, as a rule, be married at the age of 8; if not at 8,

then at 9 or 10; at the latest, before menstruation. 2—Any restraint or prohibition imposed [by law] on marriage even during the period between 8 and menstruation, is utterly improper.—*Times of India*, Bombay, December 17, 1928.

. . . Nearly every year an illegal "suttee" comes before the courts. . . . They would be of little importance if they did not obviously arouse great popular enthusiasm. The 1927 *Sati* was the heroine of the countryside, and vast crowds visited the place of her immolation. Similarly the frequent cases in which widows commit suicide in their own homes, usually by burning themselves with paraffin, are often commented upon with great approbation by the Bengali Press.—G. T. GARRATT, *An Indian Commentary*. Jonathan Cape, London, 1928. P. 235.

THE POISON-SPIDER

Parents do not feel any compunction in marrying girls of tender age to fully middle-aged or even old men.—DR. [MRS.] MALINI B. SUKTHANKAR, Honorary Physician for Children, Cama and Albless Hospitals. Testimony before Age of Consent Committee, Bombay Hearing. *Indian Social Reformer*, November 24, 1928. P. 201.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

THE POISON-SPIDER

Mahmud Abdal was a Muhammadan saint, who so loved his fellow men that he strove continually to call down blessings upon their heads, travelling to and fro over the earth on that errand. Thus, once on a day, being in Afghanistan, he crossed the southern frontier into that idolatrous country now called India. There, on its verge, he chose him a high hill on whose peak to sojourn alone awhile, looking forth over the land beyond, that he might the better pray to Allah for those strayed souls, the infidels.

And both then and thereafter, so great was the blessing streaming down from the Mount of Prayer, many sons of Islam sought the foot of the hill and there remained; so that in time the sum of their habitations became a small city bearing as a jewel the name of Islampur.

And though this city of Mahmud Abdal, favoured of Heaven, abounded in health, beauty and riches, it long remained utterly a city of Islam, not one Hindu venturing nigh the place.

For certain it was that the sons of the North, proud men and fighters all, would not endure their presence there. Nor is it likely that the saint himself would have sanctioned such dilution.

Then came the Age of the British, bringing their strange foreign doctrine that the meaning of Government is Order and Peace—bringing their strong hand behind strange doctrine, so that, saddest of changes, no more might Hindu-baiting be pursued as a recognized sport.

And then it was, under the skirts of the British, that the spoiling of Islampur began. Tempted by the riches of the place, one by one the Hindu money lenders—the *bannias*—appeared. Timid as hares, cunning as jackals, greedy as the grave, from the south they stole in and made lodgment. For the scent of gold buoyed their quaking bodies over the quicksand of fear, and the zest of enslaving men, even to the third and fourth generation, in the toils of bitter usury, healed all wounds incurred in the game.

Thus on that night in the caravanserai, when Babu Ram Das, new-come to the city, had ventured among trekking Muslim tribesmen, hopeful to drive his money-lending trade; by the long

hair of his head one had grabbed him and dragged him helpless as a turtle on its back, around and around the place among the sleeping camels, while the rest slapped their thighs in delight and, behind their great purple beards, shouted their mirth at his cries for mercy.

"Go put thee on a woman's garb—for if we catch thee again disguised as a man, we'll chop off thy wagging ears," his tormentors had thundered after him, when at last they let him go to address themselves to sleep.

But that and other such shameful injuries had he not, in these later years, comfortably poulticed with layers of gold? Did not his instinct for lean harvests always forewarn him in time to corner the crops; so that when hunger came the people must buy food of him at his own price or starve? So that at planting time they must buy seed grain of him at his own price or lose the harvest?

Beside, may not a man afford, for the sake of interest at seventy-five per cent and up, to forget some annoying trifles?

Among such trifles was little Urmila, his daughter, his only offspring, at whose birth his wife had died. Ram Das had never taken another wife. For as it happened, no girl-child within the mar-

riage circle of his sub-caste could be found within a hundred miles of Islampur; to search farther afield for a new wife meant thought and money —and Ram Das would spare neither from his usury.

"One day I will adopt me a son," said he to the fatness of his own soul. "Time enough for that. And it will be cheaper."

So Urmila, with only sleepy old aunt Sarojini, half-deaf, half-blind, to watch and teach her, wore out her childhood in the dark back-chambers of the house, or behind the wall of the inner court-yard. A dull life, without order or purpose, without childish amusements, without a soul about her who could read a written word or impart any sort of learning save caste inhibitions and the way to outwit, by words and ceremonies, the malice of the little idol-monsters, gods of the house.

Yet, somehow or other, there was spirit in the child—a baby courage and discontent, that spurred her to little rebellions at which the old aunt fretted and wept.

"Why must I always pray to these nasty little gods?" one day she demanded. "They are so ugly they hurt my eyes. And when you took me to their Great House, the Temple, I saw that at home they

are uglier still. And their house was dirty. Dirtier even than ours. Hanifan says *her* god's house is clean. And he has no images at all. And he does not spy on little girls to hurt them if they forget and make mistakes. Hanifan says that in Islam—"

"Hold thy wicked tongue!" cried the aunt, "the Holy Ones will hear! And as for Hanifan, old Muslim devil, never again shall she come hobbling into this house with her backload of faggots to sell, polluting thy mind with her talk. I'll teach thee all any good Hindu girl need know—till thy husband takes thee home."

But the husband—where was that husband? Loyal as she was to her faith and her family pride, the question, too long unanswered, vexed old Sarojini by day and disturbed her sleep at night. The child's father—had he offended the gods, that they lulled him now to destruction? How dared he wait so long to seek a match for his girl? And the girl herself—all unconscious though yet she was—the girl was so beautiful that her very beauty meant grave danger; for women in the north country are fewer than men.

But the father did nothing. And Urmila neared her twelfth year.

In that season it was that Ram Das, passing

through the bazaar, heard one Hindu gossip say to another:

"Is the daughter of Ram Das one-eyed? Or has she a leprosy, that, her twelfth year being close upon her, he still has not found her a match? Yet a little and he must be out-casted, for all his hoardings. Then how we, who bleed daily to pay him his gold, shall chuckle and laugh! But has he no thought for his soul?"

And so, Ram Das awakened. For he had no mind to limp through life to the tune of scornful laughter. And as for the lives to come—

That night he who, year in, year out, had scarcely noticed his child, turned upon her with long and bitter railing. "Why ever did I rear thee!" he whined. "I shall be ruined, ruined with the cost of wedding thee, pest that thou art! Dost know that many a pious Hindu girl has killed herself to save her father costs like this?"

"Why, then, must I wed?" asked Urmila, the natural outlaw.

" 'Why?' forsooth! Because our custom and our holy gods demand it. Because I am mocked in this life and hereafter tormented in hell if I defer longer."

"The girls of Islam are not wed so soon, I have

heard it said. Their gods will otherwise. Their gods are kind to little girls—"

"Hold thy tongue, blasphemer!" cried the father, and drove her out of sight and hearing that he might be alone with his dismay.

Yet the solution lay near enough at hand, once his keen wit sought it. Was not Keshob Datt, the jeweller, both wifeless and within the marriage-circle of the caste? Keshob Datt was nearly sixty years of age, and cracked with ancient rheums and agues. Keshob Datt must soon die, and leave upon a wife the life-long curse of widowhood. Therefore Keshob Datt, should he desire to marry, must pay high for a bride. And Keshob Datt was rich. Finally, a cleverly eloquent messenger, long dwelling in detail on Urmila's dew-fresh child-beauty, could set the old man's thin blood a-pounding with hot desire.

"After all," thought Ram Das, as he composed himself that night to sleep, "the blessed gods are good. I shall get three thousand rupees in hand, from Keshob Datt, for this girl of mine!"

Yet a few days and he told the child. For the bargain was struck. "A fine husband, Keshob Datt," he gloated, "and rich withal. A great jewel shop he has in the very centre of the bazaar. He

thirsts and pants to get thee, and surely will deck thee down with the most splendid of his shining wares."

Urmila listened, her innocent child-lips parted, her eyes like soft brown moons. Such a grand husband, such wonderful jewels, all for her!

"Yes, all for thee, my little one," laughed the father, as, with unwonted fondness, he pinched her ear.

Next morning early, as was his periodic wont, the usurer left home on a seven days' business tour —interest to collect, loans to arrange, screws to apply, temptations to offer, and all the pleasant intricacies of the trade.

Scarcely was he gone when Urmila, on tip-toe with eagerness, set to wheedling the old Sarojini, her aunt.

"Let us go to the bazaar and see the sights!" she coaxed—instinctively silent as to the real object of her interest.

"Nay, but thy father would not like it."

"I will cover my face with my *sari*, and follow close behind thee, holding thy hand. None will know me. The day is fine. The sights will be finer. We are alone, thou and I, with none to tell. Ah, come!"

And so, not too unwillingly, it was done.

In mid-bazaar, the child began looking for jewelry-shops.

"Whose stall is this?" "Whose this?" she asked, before each one. And Sarojini, to whom the bazaar was all the world, made true reply.

"Whose, then, is this?" whispered Urmila again, stopping before one richer than the rest.

"Oh, that," came the whisper back, "is the shop of Keshob Datt. And lo! there sits he, himself, thy future lord, proud among his treasures."

Urmila, drawing her *sari* close across her face, peered shyly out between its folds.

What she saw turned her heart to ice. A lean, old, long-fanged bare-bones, "all crooked and hairy," she thought, "all hairy and crooked, like a poison-spider on the wall!"

For a moment her feet stuck fast to the earth, while her eyes opened wide and wider. Then, tugging at Sarojini's skirt, she pulled her away.

"That—*that*—was he?" she gasped.

"Yes, surely."

"And *I* shall be given to *him?* Oh, why?"

"Because the blessed gods have willed it."

"Have they? Then, *I hate the gods!*"

"Aie! Aie! For that sin will they surely kill

thee!" cried the old woman, now genuinely terrified.

"Let them!" sobbed the child, and turned and ran.

Back through the bazaar she fled; then, dazed and maddened by the shock, still on and on, she saw not where. Until, her face being shrouded and the blood pounding in her brain, she veered from the road, stepped where foothold was not, and would have pitched head foremost down the broad stone steps that lead to the pool before the Mosque of Mahmud Abdal, that saint of old who prayed to Allah for mercy upon the infidel, and whose virtues founded the town.

Would have fallen and pitched head foremost, but that a strong arm caught her so that she swung and fell against the shoulder of a man.

An instant she lay there gasping, her *sari* displaced, looking full up into a face such as she had never seen before—the face of a keen young fighting man, of some fighting frontier clan. And, as she beheld, something hidden deep within her broke bonds and rose toward the sun.

"Art hurt, lovely one?" asked the stranger, smiling.

"Is the Presence—the young Lord Krishna?" she faltered.

He laughed aloud. "Nay, then, praise be to Allah! I am Mohammad Khan, son of Sheer Ali Khan, and a stranger in this town."

But still her eyes clung to his as if they could not quit. "Thou art of Islam? And that"—she was pointing now to the Mosque rising behind him—"that is the temple of thy gods?"

"That is the House of The One God. Yes," he replied. And so stood looking after her as from her low salaam she rose and fled away.

When old Sarojini, consumed with haste and fear and wheezing, at last reached home, she found her truant charge face-down upon her bed in the inner room, still as the dead. In a fury of rage and relief, Sarojini, seizing hold upon the child, shook her with all her strength, dragged at her, flung her forth upon the floor. Then there upon the floor the little one sat, limp and silent, staring far away as though the vicissitudes of the body remained unknown to her, while floods of invective surged and broke unnoticed above her head. She was holding fast to a vision, had the old

woman but guessed it—holding it fast—and would not let it go.

In vain the poor Sarojini battered against the walls of that defence, till at last exhaustion seized her, and, grumbling and groaning, she fell betimes into the noonday sleep.

Then it was, when deep sleep had submerged the weary duenna, that the child arose, her decision made.

Silently she stole away and possessed herself of the key of the postern gate. Silently, again, she padded on her little soft feet to the place of the household gods, gathered each in the folds of her *sari*, and brought them forth into the midst of the inner court.

Then, one by one, she took them in her hands, cuffed them soundly, scandalously, and stood them on their heads in the dust. When the line was complete, she knelt before it to stare them straight in their staring eyes.

"I hate you! *I hate you!* Do you hear? Do you understand? *I hate you!*" she whispered to each in turn. "*Now*, kill me if you must. I'd rather be killed than be given to your horrible, horrible poison-spider man!"

And so, with a choke of sudden tears in her

throat, she ran to the postern gate, turned the key in the lock and let herself into the street.

What a big place—what a vast place—what a barren, glaring, fearsome place for one little girl to face all alone! Like a diver before his plunge, she paused to grip her courage in both hands. And her eyes sought the dome of old Mahmud Abdal's Mosque, where it rose beyond a shapeless huddle of houses, breathing dim whiteness from the great pale sky.

In the space between, a few gaunt pariah dogs seemed the only living things astir. The road lay clear. Pulling her *sari* over her face, she put down her head and ran.

A few minutes later, and without hindrance from any quarter, she had reached the great stone stair down which, earlier in the day, she had so nearly fallen; had descended the stair, had crossed the pool-way, had—more timorously now—ascended the steps to the sanctuary beyond.

Within, open wide before her, lay the free, fair breeze-swept place of prayer. Its beautiful emptiness, its lofty and spacious dignity, its slightness of ornament, its very cleanness—seemed somehow to quiet the heavy panting of her breath. Who?—What—?

Then a voice at her side:

"Little dove of the morning, what doest thou here?"

She turned, to look once more into the eyes of her vision, and her own eyes lighted with wonder and joy. But the words were these:

"I come, my lord, to seek thy God, if perchance he will have my soul, and save it from those foul ones that give little girls to spiders."

The smile vanished from the man's eyes.

"That will He!" he answered gently. "Come!" —and taking the small hand in his, he led her within.

When Ram Das returned from his journey, all the town knew of his daughter's disappearance, and made haste to tell him so. But not a creature could offer better than a surmise as to her fate.

"She drowned herself in some well, because thou hadst left her so shamefully long unwed!" suggested one Hindu comforter.

"Assuredly she had a hidden leprosy, since thou couldst not marry her and she a great girl in her twelfth year. She hath killed herself because of her uncleanness and the shame," said another.

But about the expedition to the bazaar old Sarojini, for very fear, held her tongue. And Ram Das could only repeat, to the curious crowd that clustered about his door:

"Why did I rear her! Unhappy man that I am! Why did I not have her blotted out at birth! In what have I sinned that the curse of a girl-child should fall upon me! Eleven long years and more hath she devoured my substance without return! And now, at last, she makes me this wicked, cruel loss of three thousand good rupees! You lie, curse you! You lie that she had a leprosy, or that I could not marry her. She was sound. She was fair. And the price of her was already bargained at three thousand rupees—*three thousand good rupees*, I tell you, to be counted, cash down, *cash down*, into this right hand! And now it is lost! All lost! All lost!"

But the neighbours laughed. And their mirth drove the old man wild. "Laugh, then if you like. But some one shall pay for laughter! My girl has been kidnapped. I'll set the police after the devil's son that took her. Wherever he hides the law shall find him and crush him, and then—and then"—the foam gathered on his lips, the whites of his

eyes turned red—"and then, where the police finish, I—I—shall begin. I know ways—*I* know ways—*I* have powers—"

Afterwards it was recalled that a stranger with the face and the dress of a transfrontier tribesman, having casually added himself to the listening throng before the shop, turned with a smile and strode away, as the usurer uttered his threat.

So passed two days. On the morning of the third, as Ram Das squatted behind his ledgers, the sun, of a sudden, was choked from before him by the bulk of a man in a sheepskin coat nursing a rifle in the nook of his arm. A burly man with a great purple beard, with the eyes and the beak of an eagle, and with that in his bearing that turned to water the strength of Ram Das's bones.

"Hark ye, Ram Das, old swine that thou art, and child-eater," spoke the giant easily. "I come from Sheer Ali Khan, great among Afridi chieftains. Mark ye now well his words, for he speaks not twice"—the rifle stirred meaningly in its nesting arm—"Thus saith Sheer Ali Khan:

" 'The child thou hadst is thine no more. She hath quitted thee and thy idols forever. By the rites of Islam we have duly and fully made her a daughter of The One God and a follower of the

Prophet, on whose name be peace. Further, she is the affianced bride of Mohammad Khan, my son.

" 'But ere he take her to wife, it is my will that she remain apart in the care of the women of my household, till she get the full growth and strength of her womanhood. Because we of the Afridis will that our sons' sons be like us, their fathers—not manikins, but men.'

"Further," added the stranger, "Sheer Ali Khan saith this:

" 'If these things, Ram Das, content thee not, come. Come with all thy kith and kind at thy back, come take the child from us. We be an hundred rifles, here in my towered fortress. But our women alone shall suffice to slay such sheep as you who are no game for men.'

"Dost understand? Or hast thou still left in thy silly skull more chatter of vengeance and of laws?"

Ram Das raised his eyes. Then flat he fell upon his face, with his two hands frantically patting the clay beside the stranger's feet.

"I submit, O Lord of the Universe. Tell my lord thy master I submit. Leave me but life and peace. The girl is thine!" he cried.

Dr. Hari Singh Gour has brought out an "Age of Consent Bill." He wants a regulation that a girl should not be allowed to cohabit with her wedded husband before her 16th year or at least the 14th, and is taking a lot of trouble with regard to it. The reason . . . evidently is that if girls have sexual intercourse with males soon after puberty, weaklings will be born. . . . Brahmins are not prepared to take to the Kshatriya [soldier] profession and fight in the battlefield. Orthodox Brahmins only desire to beget good and pious sons who will succour their own selves, their ten ancestors and ten descendants—thus 21 generations in all—by marrying girls born in unblemished families, and that *before* puberty. Brahmins are quite content with the physical strength needed for performing their Vedic religious duties.—BRAHMASRI T. S. NATESA SASTRIAR. Address delivered November 19, 1927, in Sri Viswanathaswami Temple Mantapam Mayavaram, South India. Printed by Vasanpha Press, Mayavaram.

It is specifically laid down in Paras'ara, Chapter VII, verses 4-8, that . . . the parents and elder brother of that girl who is not given in marriage before her 12th year go to hell, and the Brahmin marrying such a matured girl should *not* be admitted into the community, that conversation with him is prohibited, and that for that offence he should undergo penance for 3 years subsisting on alms.—*Ibid.*

Men of 40 or 50 can marry a child of 10 or 12, and no Shastras object to that, nor does public opinion disallow it. Only "the giving away of girls in marriage after attaining puberty leads the parents into rigorous Hell," . . . While the hell to which the parents go is a prospective or imaginary one, what about the Karma or the sending of their girls *now* to a living Hell by selling them to old widowers who cannot get women of their own age, because of this pernicious custom of child marriage?—SRIMATI BHAGIRATHI AMMAL. Quoted in Calcutta *Modern Review*, May, 1928.

WHY THEY DON'T TELL

There are provinces where girls, though given in marriage early, are not sent to the father-in-law's house before they attain the age of puberty; but, in Bengal, we have no such restriction. If the orders of the father-in-law's house are not carried out, and the girl is not sent any time they like the husband can marry again. Consequently the evil effect of early marriage is more pronounced here.—Mrs. P. K. Roy. Address to Bengal Presidency Council of Women, Calcutta [Weekly] *Statesman*, July 26, 1928.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

WHY THEY DON'T TELL

A shabby little women's hospital, buried in the heart of an ancient Bengali city. An inner chamber—the doctors' retiring room. An old *chaise longue*—and, stretched thereon, eyes closed, face lined and grey with fatigue, Janet Hancock, surgeon superintendent.

Half the night and all this morning she had been either operating or conducting abnormal maternity cases such as needed all her skill. Now, at noon, every limb aching with fatigue, she had withdrawn for a half-hour's silent relaxation, to re-capture her strength.

On the stool beside her lay the newly arrived mail from home. Except for her young sister's letter, she was yet too fagged to read. But that precious missive she had already devoured. Now its first paragraph was repeating itself in her brain.

"Where is your courage, Janet? Why don't you tell the whole world the horrors you see? How can you, day by day, witness the torture of help-

less women—no—of children—for that is all your wretched girl-wives are—and still keep silence? Isn't it, really, a bit cowardly of you, Janet dear? Why don't you, anyway, demand police action?—Why in mercy's name doesn't the British Government intervene, and wipe out this monstrous outrage so long covered by the British flag?"

"Little sister—little innocent sister safe at home—God bless her simple heart!" Janet was saying to herself, while a wave of tenderness touched the firm grey lips.

But there solitude ended. In the doorway appeared the assistant surgeon, Ruth Knox by name, contrition written all over her honest face.

"I'm awfully sorry," she began. "It's a shame to disturb you—but I really didn't dare not. There's a woman here fairly screaming to get at you. She says she is in desperate trouble, that there is not a moment to lose, that you have once already saved her life and she knows you will help her now. She will tell no one anything more, and she is nearly frantic with some sort of fear. What shall I do?"

"Send her to my office, of course," sighed Janet, heavily hitching herself afoot. "I'll go see her there."

"Janet"—the younger woman laid her hand affectionately on her senior's shoulder—"you won't admit it, but you're worn out. You're battering yourself to pieces trying to reduce a torrent of misery that just goes on undisturbed, re-creating itself. Tell me, why are we content with sopping up drops around the edges? For isn't that all we are really doing, all we can hope to do, working silently as we work now? Why don't we slash through it all? Why don't we shout from the housetops till we wake up the whole world to the crimes we see every day of our lives? Why don't we demand police action, and force Government to intervene?"

Janet, on the threshold, lingered to reply.

"Once I myself used to talk like that. That was when, like you, I was new to the country. Now, after fifteen years' experience, I see another side. No walls of stone, no iron bars, were ever so impregnable as the walls that shut these Hindu women in. Their dungeons are built of fear—built of their own thought—built of tradition, of despair, of ignorance that better things exist. Built even of *pride*, God help them! Pride in their very slavery— No police, no Government, by passing of laws or by use of force, can loosen those bonds.

For the bonds are forged by their religion and as such exalted within their own minds. Till that condition changes, all you and I can do is just to 'sop up around the edges'—just to try to alleviate their bodily pain."

"Is it worth it?" asked the junior, bitterly.

"Dare you stop? Dare you turn aside?" answered the other, and went her way.

Quickly after her into her office followed the suppliant—a Hindu woman, leading a little girl. In the former Janet at once recognized a patient whom she had pulled through a difficult confinement some ten years ago and whose convalescence in hospital had been long.

"Joy! Joy!" cried the woman. "The hour of deliverance is come—for behold, the Presence remembers! And her hands, that carry the blessing of God—her hands that delivered my own body from torment—her hands of auspicious omen will now save my heart's dearest, this child that the Gracious Presence herself gave me"—and there the torrent of speech broke in hysterical sobs.

"What is it?—What's wrong, then? *You* tell me, little one," coaxed Janet in the same tongue. Then, to give the overwrought woman time to

recover composure, she drew the child forward and parted its *sari* to look into its face.

But the sight of that face, for all her experience, struck like a blow at the heart. So small, so infantile, yet so aged with some unnatural wisdom, so stamped with present terror and so dragged and drawn with pain.

"What's wrong, then, little one?" Janet repeated, mechanically, while she stared transfixed at the tragedy revealed.

But the mother, now, had found words:

"It is her littleness—her *littleness*, that will undo us all. Her age is not yet upon her, but her husband demands her now. The fancy has taken him that he will not wait! She goes to him tomorrow. See! He is the money-lender who lives just yonder, across the street. There, look! Just there in that big house that rises so tall above the rest. And he is a great and violent man, used to be obeyed and satisfied. We did not think he would call the child so soon. She is too little for him. Assuredly he will in anger send her back—and then are we humiliated forever before all men.

"The Doctor Miss Sahib must know"—the

mother rushed on without a pause—"that we ourselves have assuredly done all that we can. The mother-in-law has used the fulness of her wisdom. The *vaid* [native doctor] has worked his best—and though the child is already weak from pain and bleeding, still she remains too small—too small!—

"And so, O Gracious Presence, O Succorer of Women, by consent hard-wrung from the mother-in-law through our dire need, I bring the child to thy feet. By whatever means, and quickly, quickly, take thou away this curse of littleness, that my daughter prove acceptable to her lord, and that he shall not, in anger, reject her upon our hands."

Janet heard her through—the age-old tale but told afresh. Then, gently:

"O mother," she said, "I am sad. Your husband is known as an important man. I see him sitting in seats of honour, upon ceremonial occasions. I read a splendid speech of his, a year or two ago, about the wickedness of giving little girls as wives and how that practice is ruining you Hindus.—And you yourself, by your own experience and by what you learned within these hospital walls, know how true were his words. Yet

now here you are, permitting the consummation of your own daughter's marriage when her body is half-grown— Nay, more, you are asking me to perform an operation that would complete the ruin that you at home have most horribly begun. And why? To save *what?* To save whom? Have you never a thought for your child? Is there no shred of mercy anywhere in your hearts?"

"But the Presence does not understand. Is it not also for the child? What fate do the gods award a rejected wife? As to my lord, it is true that he speaks as the Sahibs speak concerning the evil of giving girls to their husbands before yet their bodies are ripe. Nor does he miss an occasion publicly so to testify. But in one's own case, surely, one must face facts. One must act according to the needs of the family. It is our *Karma*, this—our destiny. We may not escape. So, help us, O Gracious One, quickly help!"

Faithfully the surgeon met plea with plea, and when, a half hour later, she sent the pair away, she felt that her words had roused a conscience and saved a child. Then, in the rush of work that filled to overflowing every moment of that day and the next, the incident merged into the background of her mind.

It was well into the heart of the second night that Janet, asleep in bed, was wrenched awake by some harsh shock of sound. "What was that?" Trying to recapture it she sat bolt upright, her heart stopped still.

Then it came again—from the street beneath—the sharp, high, quivering cry of a child in agony.

Janet sprang out of bed, thrust on her shoes, snatched a garment and dashed for the street door. Ruth Knox, satchel in hand, overtook her there, and the two together plunged into the crowd of Indian men that from every door and alley was now pouring into the road.

"Some one is hurt," Janet called out. "We are doctor Miss Sahibs, come to help. Let us pass!" and so, commanding, pleading, pushing, the two burrowed through to the centre of the throng, until, over men's shoulders, they could see something lying on the ground, something that writhed feebly, emitting low wails of pain.

"Bring that child to the hospital," called Janet, shoving farther forward. "It shall be cared for there."

But, at her words, a dubious murmur rose—and then, with a dash, two men snatched up the

child, who shrieked thereat, horribly, and hurried away with it into a house.

No longer to be stayed, the doctors pushed close after, clearing the threshold on the heels of the bearers before the great street door could be slammed shut.

Passing through to the inner courtyard, the men laid their burden on the floor. The two doctors dropped on their knees beside it—a frail little girl, apparently scant ten years old.

"Neck broken," said one to the other, after a moment's examination. "Nothing to do but give a hypodermic. It will all be over so very soon."

And so, as the drug did its work of mercy they awaited the end.

Meantime, recognizing a friend among the men now clustering thick around, "What happened?" Janet asked. "*You* explain to us, Hari Babu. This is your house. What befell this child?"

"It appears," answered the man, readily, "that this girl, Doctor Miss Sahib, is the new wife of our neighbour the money-lender. And this night he first took her home. It appears she could not have pleased him. It appears also, that his aphrodisiacs must have been—a little over-exciting. For

to throw her out of his window—his really very extremely high window—was indiscreet."

"'Indiscreet'? repeated Ruth Knox, dryly. "Why indiscreet?"

"Because, with the noise and excitement that resulted, the police might so easily have come to know."

"Why would you not bring this child to hospital, when we asked you to do so?" pursued Janet.

"Because—does not the Doctor Miss Sahib see? —thence also, and so easily, the police might learn—"

"But why, in Heaven's name, should the police *not* know a thing like this?" Ruth flared, no longer capable of self-repression.

An ugly muttering answered, running from lip to lip, till Hari Babu beat it down:

"Peace, brothers, know ye not that this lady is new to India? She is a friend. She means no harm. Give her time to learn. Doctor Miss Sahib"—he was speaking to Ruth directly now—"we Hindus permit no man to know the secrets of our *zenanas*. Our wives are our own property. None may ask concerning them, friend or foe, nor challenge the husband's rights. Should the police, then, profane

our sacred *zenanas*, lifting the veil? Oh, we are a patient folk, but the day *that* shame attacks us, your world and ours will run with blood."

From the form on the floor, a faint sound, as life passed.

The two doctors did what they might; then, drawing a fold of cloth across the little face, they turned to go.

But in the shadow of the passage a cluster of women awaited them, falling at their feet to "take the dust."

"Doctor Miss Sahibs—how shall we beseech you! In the name of your own God, do not tell the police! Do not! Oh, do not! For if you tell, as sure as the coming of the sun in to-morrow's heaven, never again will the men of this place let you come to us their wives. Never again will they let us go to you for help, however great our pain. Now that you have been these years near us, do not close our doors upon you and leave us without hope of aid. The money-lender was mad, oh, *mad!* All day he had been drinking the wedding-drugs, as our men do, exciting himself for the night. But if you reveal to the police the thing that he, in his madness, did to the wife now happily dead, you con-

demn every woman of us all to suffer both life and death without the blessing of your hands.

"You have heard the word of the men of this household. Know that it is the word of all true Hindu men. Never will they permit intervention in their *zenanas*—not though the world run blood."

"Do you remember the questions you asked me the other day?" said Janet to Ruth, as, a few moments later, they wearily re-mounted the hospital steps—" 'Why don't we shout from the housetops?' 'Why don't we demand intervention?'—and 'If we told half we know, any Government must intervene.' Well, after what you've seen tonight, what is your idea now? To act for the longer issue? To 'slash through' and wake the conscience of the Western world, sacrificing this handful of women in our street to the future womanhood of India? Perhaps we should do just that. I confess I don't know what's right. You and I are too close up to get a focussed view. We've got tomorrow's work before us. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, like yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, through the years, all, all alike! As for me, I'm too tired to think. That, too, is

chronic now. All I can do is to plod away on the same old job. Maybe God, some day, will waken His world, to hear and see and care. *I* can't. I'm too tired—and too close up."

And Janet it was, still plodding at the same old job, who told this story.

Let us look for a moment at child marriage. . . . Do not let us say it is the fault of our family, or of our mother or of somebody else. It is your fault; it is my fault. Nobody can prevent us, nobody can force us into doing something we do not want to do. If there were men and women throughout India who said: 'I will not have my child married before a certain age,' then it would not happen. You are afraid. You are afraid of tradition; you are afraid for your daughter, you are afraid for your son. You are a mass of fear. . . . Men are inslaved by their beastly passions and they are lost to the suffering of the child and to all sense of what is due to her.—KRISHNAMURTI. Address at Adyar, December, 1925. *Stri-Dharma*, January, 1926.

I have spoken again and again on the public platform about the cruelty of making a girl a mother before she is full-grown, and of the injury that such a practice does to the vitality of

the race. Many a man knows that it is wrong, and openly says so; he asks why other people marry their children too young, and yet he still does it himself, because of what people would say if he did not.—DR. ANNIE BESANT. Quoted in *Stri-Dharma*, September, 1928.

Hinduism is a religion, not merely a social order, as some non-Indian observers have said. It has some features that have won the plaudits of sympathetic students. But to most of the sons and daughters of India it has brought either oppression or an assurance of the right to oppress.—BHAGAT RAM,[1] "What is Hinduism?" *Indian Witness*, Lucknow, December 5, 1928.

[1] Mr. Bhagat Ram, of Ferozepur, is an independent Hindu social reform pioneer who devotes himself to declaring the practical status of women, children, outcastes and dumb animals, in Hinduism.

MAGGOT TO MAN

Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk.—GANDHI. Quoted in *Young India*, October 20, 1927. P. 355.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

They were sitting over coffee, in the General's quarters, after a dinner whose talk had clung to the issues of service on the Afghan boundary. Bannu, Kohat, the Khyber, Waziristan—each had flashed past in review as man after man, from sheer familiarity blind to what he did, added to the portrait of daily life on the Frontier—its hazards, its gallantry, its wild primeval humour, its lightning tragedies.

"What sort of Indian troops would you choose to command, given your choice?" presently ventured the guest of the evening.

"Gurkhas have no second," answered one young captain, promptly.

"Gurkhas are fighters—none better," assented another. "But for some types of work the Pathan . . ."

"As for me, give me the Sikh. Hardened, disciplined and under good officers, the Sikh is a glorious"—interrupted a third, only himself to be overlaid by a youngster who eagerly began:

"It's all very well for you fellows to talk that old stuff—but whatever you say I'll stake my Mahrattas . . ."

And so, forever true to form, each dashed to the defense of his own men.

"Quite so. But every one of you"—it was the General himself speaking now—"every last one of you has sung the praise of a martial race—of some type familiar to the limelight. Now, where, I ask, is the champion of the non-combatant—of the good old sweep?"

The younger men looked puzzled, almost hurt. Their praise had been given in earnest; to mock it were the act of a rank outsider. And the General was the pride of their lives.

The General grinned, enjoying his effect. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"Having talked Frontier shop all evening," he began, "perhaps we might do with a change. None of us gives much thought to the virtues of the non-combatant, indispensable as he is. I confess I missed them myself until certain chance glimpses of his unsung gallantry rather opened my eyes. So I'll venture a yarn if you like. It can't be groomed into a drawing-room tale, but perhaps,

when it's done, reason may be found to forgive its roughness.

"The things I'm now thinking of happened in Mespot, before the taking of Kut, when I commanded the —— ——. Our regiment had as medical officer an old personal friend of mine called Gordon—a queer old nut, as original and as full of human enthusiasms as an egg is of meat. An I.M.S.[1] man he was, familiar with many of the peoples and tongues of the Babel we call India. Stout fellow, Gordon.

"But, before going farther, I'd better explain one or two points, for the benefit of our guest. As you know, then, the Hindu religion lays down strict rules governing or affecting almost every act in the daily life of its disciples. As, for example, that rule which provides that no Hindu shall clean up his own dirt.

"To meet this situation, the code provides that a certain portion of the community known as 'Untouchables' shall from birth be condemned to serve as scavengers to the Hindu world. Every Indian regiment in the field must be accompanied by an 'Untouchable' contingent, called 'Sweepers,'

[1] Officer of the Indian Medical Service.

which body, when troops are on the march, falls in between the column and its transport—a ragged, dirty, evil-smelling, patient lot, apt to be railed at, cursed or abused by the Indian rank and file whenever opportunity arises.

"Well, then, to get back to Mespot:

"It was after the loss of Kut. We had been doing a lot of fruitless fighting and now the regiment was lying in a festering backwater away down the line. The heat was terrific—the air day by day like the breath of flame. The mercury, in the tents, reached 120 degrees. Supplies had run low. Reorganization was in process, but under conditions of extreme difficulty. Meantime, sickness raged among all ranks, and the regimental medical officer had his hands full.

"Nevertheless, this man Gordon—I told you, didn't I, that Gordon was our medical officer's name?—came to me one day in a blither of excitement about a newly-invented grievance of his own.

" 'Colonel,' he said, 'give me ten minutes, will you? I want to talk about sweepers. They've got on my nerves.'

"For a moment I thought poor old Gordon, who certainly was overworked, had a touch of the

sun. The sweeper contingent, to be sure, comes more or less under the Regimental Medical Officer. But sweepers, docile machines that they are, are supposed to trouble nobody. Gordon, however, galloped ahead with his story.

" 'You know,' he asked, 'our old head sweeper? —Tall, scraggy chap with a straggling grey beard and sharp black eyes?'

"As he spoke, the mental image of the man he meant rose before me—a picturesque enough figure, for all his shapeless dirty-grey followers' dress and his shabby old turban. Supervision of officers' latrines was his special job—and, of course, superintendence of the whole sweeper contingent.

" 'You *do* recall him?' exclaimed Gordon, delighting in the fact. 'And he was *good*—so good that he fairly built an art out of his work. In fact, his intelligence and spirit made him so useful that I had several times occasion to thank him for the help he was giving me. But, aside from his job, he had a hobby—fighting. Yes, sir, sweep though he was, *fighting*. Smile, if you like, but let me tell you how he worked it:

" 'When an attack is launched, he, of course, like the rest of the sweepers, is back where he be-

longs, with the pack-mules and transport. But no sooner does the action begin than he starts quietly to sneak his way up from line to line till he can lift the bandolier and rifle from a fallen soldier. That secured, he dashes for the front line and jolly well sticks there, a combatant among the combatants, till the action is done. Then he makes a bolt for the rear, and, well before he is needed, is at his proper station, ready on hand for duty, innocent as Moses. And so cleverly did he manœuvre it all that never once did I, at least, so much as guess what he was up to.

" 'But when I was cleaning up after our last attack, what should I find, in the front line position, but this old chap's dead body, a bullet between the eyes, the hands still gripping a rifle.

" 'Then I asked, and the men told me the story. From the very beginning, it seems, he had been playing his little game—and he'd fought in at least ten engagements.

" 'Well, that was that. And I had almost forgotten it until the other day, inspecting camp, I came across a thing that brought it all back with a rush. It wasn't much, maybe—just a sweeper—a boy of sixteen, the youngest of the lot—squatting out in the blistering sun, singing as loud as he

could shout—just some doggerel it was—*koi lŭrta hai, koi mŭrta hai*—"Some fight, some die," over and over again, while with his bare hands he cleaned latrine-pots.—With *his bare hands*, mind you—nothing to work with but his two bare hands! No wonder all sweepers stink to heaven!

" 'Then somehow the whole thing bit into me. I haven't yet got away from it. Men called sub-beasts by their fellow-men till they themselves believe it! Men in the name of a thing called religion condemned to live their whole lives among human excreta! Men *born* to dishonour, abuse, filth, slavery of body and soul—held down without possibility of escape—and yet, in spite of all that, still men enough to sing at their work, and to wangle the chance like a man to die! By God, sir—' By this time dear old Gordon had worked himself to a blazing standstill. 'By God, sir—it isn't—it *isn't good enough!*'

" 'Quite so,' I assented, to help him out, 'and have you an answer?'

" 'That's just why I've come to you'—he was off again now.—'I've got an idea and I want your sanction. First of all, I've worked out a new latrine-pot that can be kept as clean as a whistle without ever being touched, inside, with the hands.

We can easily make 'em ourselves, all we want of 'em—now we're camped. You just take a kerosene tin, cut it in halves, put a handle on each half'—and on he went, all enthusiasm, drawing diagrams as he explained his simple enough invention.

" 'But I want more than that,' he concluded. 'I want permission to put a more pukka uniform on my sweepers—to get 'em out of their filthy, worn-out camp followers' kit, to clean 'em up so they don't stink, and to march 'em in formation when the command moves, instead of their trooping along like a drove of pigs. If only for that old head-sweeper chap's sake, I want to try to make men of 'em.'

"Now, no one could question old Gordon's ardent sincerity," the General went on. "Yet I confess, I had my doubts of his scheme as a workable notion. But to express doubt, at that juncture, would have been needlessly to dampen the spirits of a keen Medical Officer whose own morale meant much to the regiment. So, 'Go ahead, Gordon,' I said, 'and good luck to you.'

"Gordon went ahead. He manufactured his model latrine-tins in quantity. Somehow or other evolving a uniform, he turned his sweepers out all neatly identical. And, from among their own

number, he chose them a chief to take the place of that chap the Turk got.

"A brawny fellow was this new head-sweeper, some twenty-five years old, and about five foot eight in height. His face was big and round and smiling and he sported a black moustache—all of which details are still curiously clear to me because of what finally happened.

" 'I picked this particular chap, Gubbu by name, to be head man,' Gordon soon confided, 'chiefly because I think I can teach him football by the time the weather cools.'

" 'Football—and sweepers!' I thought. But I held my tongue, for the thing was beginning to be interesting. And, sure enough, play football they soon did, of a sort, and with enormous enthusiasm.

"So came the turn of the year, the march on Kut, and the pursuit to Baghdad. Stiff enough marching it was, too,—from five at night till nine next morning, with heavy kit on the back, while the dust raised by our seven miles of transport sifted into our very souls.

"But the rabble that used to follow the troops now looked almost like troops themselves. With Gubbu at their head, walking like a sergeant-

major, they swung along in column, all dressed up in their newly improvised uniform, each day growing smarter and smarter. For Gordon, you see, by one means or another—never was a more ingenious follow!—had gradually imbued them not only with self-respect but actually with *esprit de corps*. Now, they felt, they had a real officer of their own—one who was not ashamed of them, one who was ready to stand up for them, and his very support reflected upon them a certain amount of position.

"At last, we made contact with the Turk, and from that day fighting continued with little interruption.

"Early in the course of this, Gubbu began quietly annexing stray Turkish rifles, watching his chance to snatch them, here and there, and stowing them away out of sight amongst the sweepers' kit. Some day, he probably believed, they would find their chance to use them. Meantime, not always could he resist the temptation to sling a rifle across his own shoulders, in yearning imitation of the fighting man.

"Of course it was horribly irregular—this thing of non-combatants carrying arms—but, as has truly been said, in that particular campaign 'every

regulation save the unwritten one—to use one's common sense—was swept aside for the expedience of the hour.' And Gordon himself, whenever he spoke of his sweeps—which was daily—was like a child in a toy shop.

"One particular night, during our show on a certain bend of the Tigris, he appeared at mess fairly bursting with pride. 'Colonel, that head-sweeper of mine, Gubbu,' he began, fixing me with a glittering eye—and then I knew I was hopelessly in for the traditional fond parent's story.

"That afternoon, as now I heard, he, Gordon, had been crawling up a hot front-line trench looking after wounded, when suddenly ahead, in a spot where an officer had just been killed, whom should he see but his precious Gubbu—Gubbu, rifle in hand, comfortably snuggled down to rest his elbows on the parapet—Gubbu exposed to the waist, solemnly plugging bullets at a deadly little black square in the cliff-side across the river.

"Round after round of captured Turkish ammunition he was blowing away—oblivious alike of his sanitary duties, his non-combatant status and the little spurts of mud sprayed over him by the return fire he drew from the whole enemy river-

bank. Cover he disdained, for the problem, to him, was the simple one of target practice at a square black window on the farther bank. Into that window, he firmly believed, each of his bullets sped. Cover? Why should he want cover, when, to load this glorious fighting man's rifle, it was so much easier to sit bolt upright? And beside, surely the next shot must bring that devil of a Turkish sniper sprawling head-foremost out of his hole straight down to hell. For where else than hottest hell belonged any misbegotten son of sin who would actually pepper Head-sweeper Gubbu's own Officers' Latrines, and that for hours running?

"Most sympathetically telling his tale, old Gordon interpreted all these Gubbu-thoughts, throwing in for final good measure: 'And the rascal probably also said to himself:

" 'Who knows—I may get a medal for this! And here comes Gordon Doctor Sahib crawling on his belly like a snake and angry like a buffalo. Quick then, one more shot! And, indeed I am a little too deaf to hear orders at this moment.'

" 'But I yelled at him,' Gordon went on, 'at the top of my lungs I yelled—"Keep down! For God's sake keep down, you silly fool!" '

" 'Ha, Sahib,' he called back. *'Lekin aik shniper*

hie (but there is a sniper) *jo burra tŭkleef deta hai* (who is giving much trouble) *mai oosko márúnga.* (I am going to hit him.)'

"Well, Gordon, and what do you call such a performance?" I asked, as the narrative ended, trying to look ferocious.

" 'You, sir, speaking officially, must call it disorderly conduct, I'm afraid,' Gordon answered. 'But, if I may say so, *I* call it just one small incident in the making of a maggot into a man.' "

The General paused. "Are you all tired listening to this long story?" he asked the room. "Cheer up! There's little more to tell. The things I've just related happened, as I said, during our push on a certain bend of the Tigris River. In the course of that effort, which lasted a full month, the regiment suffered in killed and wounded till every survivor counted. And just at the moment when we thought the worst was over—that at last we had worn the Turk out, up he rose, gallant fighter that he is, counter-attacked us on both flanks, and had actually pierced our line before we could roll him back to his old position.

"It was during that very sortie that good old Gordon got his next thrill. He was hard at work among the wounded up in our front trenches. The

Turkish guns had our range almost to a dot, and their shell-fire, roaring its promise, was dealing us mud-bursts, splinters and casualties. Our men were crouching against the parapet, momentarily expecting the attack, when word sifted down from the line beyond:

" 'We're short of ammunition!'

" 'Short of ammunition, and Islam coming over! That means bayonets,' thought Gordon—and groaned at the thought.

" 'We're short of ammunition. For God's sake get some up!'—came the word again.

"But what use to pass that word on, when every man's utmost was needed, just wherever he stood, to hold the ground under his boots!

" 'Bayonets!' groaned Gordon. 'Bayonets and bombs!' foreseeing, surgeon-wise, the grisly work ahead.

"And just then what should rise before his startled eyes, as it might be a fantasy of delirium, but a great heap of S.A.A. boxes [2]—a regular young mountain of S.A.A. boxes—strolling up the trench apparently all by itself.

"Gordon stared. Nearer the vision rolled—till it developed, in its lower part, a pair of human

[2] Small Arms Ammunition.

legs, wobbling V-shape under the weight they supported.

"Something about those legs struck Gordon's sensitive spot.

" 'Gubbu,' he shouted, as the thing came abreast. 'Gubbu!'

" 'Ha, Sahib!'

"Stooping to peer under, Gordon caught a glimpse of the big familiar face, now all aflood with a beatific grin.

" 'Gubbu! *You* don't belong up *here!* Where in Heaven's name are you going?'

" 'Going to my death, Sahib,' came the answer, jubilant, 'I'm no sweeper any more—never any more. I'm a soldier now.'

"Just then a shell burst in the trench itself. And when Gordon had time to look up from the dirty work it made, Gubbu, whether in fragments or otherwise, had disappeared.

"—Well, and so, at last we re-took Kut. And Gordon by that time was so pleased with his pets that he helped them to celebrate with a Sweepers' Dinner, for which they collected, somewhere or other, a live sheep or two, inviting their fellow-sweepers from other regiments.

"But on the night after that gala occasion Gor-

don sought me out privately with urgent trouble on his mind.

" 'Colonel,' said he, 'you know my head-sweep, Gubbu?' (As if any one could have escaped knowing Gubbu, with Gordon around!) 'Well, the fellow's under arrest. But before the affair comes up for action, I want to say two words. I've looked into it myself, and the facts are these:

" 'After my Sweepers' Dinner, Gubbu certainly got drunk, thoroughly drunk, beastly drunk, on deviously acquired rum. And, being in that condition, he took a rifle on his shoulder. And on top of his turban he stuck a bright and shining latrine-tin, steel-helmet-wise. And then, got up in that style, he went and swaggered around and around camp singing songs of a questionable character and shouting at the top of his lungs that he'd enlisted as a soldier, a soldier, a soldier, and had only by mistake got written down sweep; but, just because he was a soldier, a soldier, a soldier, soldier's honour forbade protest while His Majesty the King Emperor was busy with a War.

" 'And then he'd yell more nonsense, till nobody could sleep.

" 'Undoubtedly, Colonel,' Gordon went on,

'Gubbu was drunk—drunk on active service—and that means a court-martial. But, by Jove, sir, after what he did, carrying a backload of S.A.A. up the trenches under direct shell fire—getting it up to our men who, without him, had nothing but their bayonets to meet the Turks' attack—after what Gubbu did that day, if he's to be court-martialed for his subsequent war-dance, I, as responsible for him, shall feel obliged to recommend him, sweep though he is, for a V.C. Yes, by Jove, sir, for a V.C.!' "

Here the General stopped and refilled his pipe, evidently at the end of his story.

"And what *did* you do to Gubbu?" asked the guest.

The General smiled into the flame of his match. "As I suggested before," he said, "we sometimes put common-sense above regulations."

The Hindu religion teaches that they are born outcaste because of sins committed in some former life and must remain outcastes until they die. There is no escape on this side of the grave.—The Right Rev. Henry Whitehead, D.D. *The Outcaste of India and the Gospel of Christ.* 1927. P. 5.

No greater wrong can be done to a community endowed with human feelings and human capacities than to place it in such circumstances as to force it or lead it to believe that its members are eternally and for all time to come doomed to a life of ignorance, servitude and misery and that any sort of ambition in them for betterment or improvement is Sin. These voiceless millions are ground every day into the dust, and are treated with contempt, a barbarity that is not accorded even to the vilest of animals. Hungry, naked, dispirited, living in wretched hovels, cringing in their attitude through long oppression, driven often by hunger to eat anything they get, aban-

doned religiously, morally, mentally and physically, they remain utterly miserable and helpless. —RAO BAHADUR M. C. RAJAH. *The Oppressed Hindus*. Huxley Press, Madras. 1925. P. 7.

Untouchability and social depression are the creation of our social system and I do not see how the mere facilities that the Government may give to the untouchable and depressed classes will remove untouchability and social degradation from which they suffer.—SIR HARI SINGH GOUR. *Legislative Assembly Debates*. February 23, 1928. P. 704.

No protective legislation will help them [the outcastes] unless the so-called higher class Hindus cleanse themselves, and are eager to do justice to the suppressed class. And when they have cleansed themselves no such legislation is necessary. At the present moment law enables them to use public schools and public wells, but the so-called high class Hindus successfully prevent their use by them.—GANDHI. *Young India*, July 14, 1927. P. 232.

In the theory of Hinduism, as propounded by sleek-looking, immaculately dressed "Swamis" to

Western women with an abundance of money and leisure and a paucity of common sense, an outcaste can become a Brahmin by developing and refining his character; but the teaching is carefully withheld from the outcaste himself, and in actual practice the outcaste who would aspire to become a Brahmin would hear talk that differs as widely as the poles are apart from the *Swamis'* gentle and uplifting philosophy, specially made for the Western widow's drawing room.—BHAGAT RAM. *Indian Witness*, Lucknow, December 5, 1928.

THE TWO RANIS

The fact that, of the [Indian] population of twenty years of age and over, nearly ninety per cent cannot be reached directly by the printed word creates a barrier between them and every branch of useful knowledge.—*Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, 1928. Pp. 559-60.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

THE TWO RANIS

The events about to be transcribed here took place a brief while since in a certain Central Indian State—a small state, scantly populated, all hill-villages and rocks, jungle-scrub and tigers.

The Raja was ill, of a grievous sickness that neither the English doctor nor the court astrologer nor the *vaid*—the Hindu medical man who deals in charms and potions and native medicines, could cure.

And the First Rani, being sonless whilst the Second Rani possessed a lusty boy, was in no mood whatever to welcome widowhood.

"Shall I go weep in a corner for the rest of my life, and pray and do penance and starve, while that thrice-accursed reptile, as regent, lords it over us all in the name of her loathly boy!" she was heard to exclaim, setting her square jaw.

And then, like the dynamo she was, she took action.

"Call me my astrologer," she commanded.

So the astrologer came and stood beyond the First Rani's *purdah* curtain.

"Knowest thou a star-reader wiser than thou?" called the harsh familiar voice to the confidant of Destiny.

"Nay, O Pearl of the Morning. How indeed should such exist? Have the gods not filled me thy servant with special wisdom, all for thy own special profit?"

"Get thee hence, then," snapped the voice, impatient, "and send me the *vaid*, running."

So the *vaid* ran fast—as fast as so fat a man may run, till his panting was heard at the First Rani's *purdah* curtain.

"Knowest thou a *vaid* cleverer than thou to cure the sick?" came the voice that was like the voice of an ungreased cart-wheel railing at evil roads.

"Nay, indeed, O Glory of the Hills, since truth is desired, there lives none such."

"Knave that thou art, and imbecile, fly, before I have thee beaten—and send me the barber."

So the barber, as with wings on his heels, flew, till he stood beyond the First Rani's *purdah* curtain.

"Slave, thou travellest much in the land, seeking out marriage mates for our people. Think

well! Hast ever, in thy travels, seen a powerful holy man who is also a sorcerer?" And through the bare words rang the tone that whips slow memories.

"Such an one, O Queen of the World, did I see on my last journey, when our Master sent me forth with those who sought out a bride for our Princeling, his young son," replied the barber promptly, thankful to the gods that so had preserved him.

"'*Young son!*'" the lady growled, yet would get on with the business. "What did thy sorcerer, to prove his power?" she demanded impatiently.

"This did he, O Gracious One," returned the barber. "The place being holy, the place of a pilgrimage, he sat upon the ground within his sacred ring and recited texts, whilst his disciple, as is ever the wont, held out his begging-bowl for alms.

"But when, because of his known great holiness, many had gathered about him, he spoke and said: 'To me, through merit of my long meditations, the gods have given power to transmute copper to silver, silver to gold.'

"'Wilt deign, O Holy One, to show us this power?' the people asked.

"Then did the holy man again lift up his voice

and say: 'As many of ye as be here present and have money in hand, sit down in a circle around me. And give to me, each man of you all, the most valuable coin thou hast.'

"So the people sat down and gave each a coin, whether of copper or silver, into the hands of the Holy One, who then made clay and enclosed each coin in a separate ball of clay and set the balls on the earth before him, in fair order.

" 'Now,' said he, 'all being prepared, I shall recite many powerful verses of sacred writ having virtue to raise all metals to metals of greater value. And do ye all faithfully repeat the verses after me, missing not a syllable thereof. Which being rightly and duly performed without flaw or error, I break the veil of clay, and the miracle stands complete. Each man of you takes silver for his copper, for his silver gold.

" 'Only, one small thing else must ye do: *While I work, refrain yourselves utterly from the thought of a white monkey with a black face.* Let that thought but cast its shadow across the mind of one man here present, and my work is spoiled —my precious soul-force all wasted, with no recompense to me but these miserable coins.' "

"What then befell?" asked the First Rani eagerly.

"Why, then," returned the barber, from beyond the *purdah* curtain, "the verses having been duly pronounced and so repeated, the Holy One broke the balls of clay, and lo! every coin was as it had been—copper when copper, when silver, silver still. And the Holy One waxed hot in wrath.

" 'Which of ye, sons of perdition, hath thought the thought forbidden, and so, by his worthlessness, hath made all my strong spiritual striving of no avail? Which? Confess!'

"Then answered one of the people, in great fear: 'O Holy One, it was I. In my weakness and for all my endeavour, I could not keep from thinking that I must not remember the white monkey with a black face, and so, in that very thought, remembered him!'

"Then the disciple of the Holy One, himself in great bitterness, gathered all the coins into his master's begging-bowl, while the people drove the feeble-wit away with sticks and stones and well-earned curses."

"Truly a great sorcerer!" came the voice of the First Rani. "Now take thou Sivaji, my trotting camel. Swiftly go and swiftly return bringing that

Holy One with thee, if perchance he may save our Lord's life."

So the barber sped, and came again, bringing the sorcerer.

Then the First Rani, whom all feared with a fear that melted the joints and sinews, because of subtle hatreds and deadly jealousies—because of swift daggers or secret stranglings or little doses of powdered glass—then the First Rani clothed herself beautifully and went and stood before the Raja and said:

"Maharaj Sri, I have heard of a sorcerer of sublime potency, who shall give us back thy health."

"Call thy sorcerer, for indeed I need such," groaned the Raja, from his bed.

So the Holy One came and stood before the Raja and looked upon the Raja and said:

"O Lord of the Universe, having also seen thy fate in the stars, of a surety I perceive that but one thing now can save thy life. That thing is, that the life of one of thy subjects should enter into thy life, to strengthen that which ebbs."

"Whose life but that of the Reptile's son!" thought the First Rani, and drew closer her golden *sari* to hide the glad blaze in her eyes.

"Lift my bed. Carry me out into the hall of audience. Summon all my household," groaned the Raja, gripped with pain.

And when the household had gathered, even to the number of about two hundred what with women and children and men, the Raja raised himself on his bed so that all could look well upon him, with his great black parted beard tied over the top of his head. And he said:

"O my people, unless one of you will give his life for mine, I die."

But because his voice was weak with sickness, the chief councillor, after him, cried the words aloud.

Then arose from the people a general humble murmur. "What are our lives beside the life of our Father?" "Take me!" "Take me!" "Take me!" and, "Take us all!"

But the gentle Second Rani, withdrawing her embrace from her little son who clung beside her, impelled him forward with those two hands that were like rose-tipped lotus-flowers. "The costliest sacrifice may best appease the gods!" she said, and sank unconscious into her women's arms.

But before the child could reach the sick man's bed, a swift grip dragged him aside as one of the

palace women, pushing a boy before her, usurped the young heir's place.

"Father! Master! Lord! Take mine!" she cried. "A son is a son, to his mother's heart. This my son is seven years old—a perfect age. And he is every whit as dear to me as is her son and thine to our lady the Second Rani. This sacrifice is costly enough. Take *my* boy!"

So they carried the Raja back into his apartments. And there, that night, in a shut-in place, came the First Rani and the sorcerer, with certain of the principal officers of the state. And the sorcerer, with nuts and lamps and incantations, made strong sorcering.

After which he dealt with the son of the palace woman, until the boy's life passed from him.

After that, they carried the small body, wrapped in a cloth, and dropped it secretly into the green-scummed fish-pond that lies in the inner palace in the centre of the women's courtyard. And much money was forthwith paid to the sorcerer, lest worse befall.

But the Raja, nevertheless, died in three days' time and was burned on a gorgeous funeral pyre, with great pomp and ceremony—although fear of the English half ruined the glory by preventing

the burning alive of so much as a single wife or concubine at his side.

That night, the palace woman whose child, having saved the heir of the state, now lay in the bottom of the fish-pond, was quietly smothered in her bed.

Yet nothing had ever been heard of it all save for a quarrel and strong jealousy that flashed into sudden flame among the officers of state. And those who had not been chosen to witness the passing of the life of the child of the palace woman went privily before the British Viceroy's Agent in that region, and secretly told him, concerning the matter, all they knew—and more also.

The Viceroy's Agent, the State having now come under his surveillance because of the minority of the new Raja, made investigations forthwith and summoned into council all the chief officers of state, omitting not one.

"The measure of the unwelcome of the First Rani—is it now full?" he inquired.

"It is full and running over," they replied.

"The matter being a matter under your own state laws and not within my field, what, then, says your law concerning such as the First Rani?" asked the Viceroy's Agent.

"By the law of our State, and according to our religion and by the custom thereof, the First Rani, with fair allowance of gold and not publicly to disgrace our ruling house, should be turned away—be it to her father's house or whither she chooses, so only that she vanish hence."

So the First Rani, her terrible wrath now impotent, disappeared forever. And the gentle Second Rani, strong in the love of her son, ruled in her stead as regent of the State.

But as for that Holy One, the sorcerer—for all the weight of his goldbag he made off so far and so fast that not even the strictest search was ever able to find him.

. . . If women are to have that freedom of mind and that variety of interests, without which there can be no joyous life, the Purdah must go. The woman behind her Purdah is as much a captive as a bird in a cage. Pent up behind the Purdah she is steeped in ignorance and allowed to grow and to flourish like a pet animal. No ray of light nor enlightenment can penetrate into the Zenana. —HER HIGHNESS THE MAHARANI CHIMANA SAHEB GAEKWAR OF BARODA. *All-India Women's Conference on Educational Reform Report*, Scottish Missions Industries Company, Poona, January 5-8, 1927. P. 17.

The need for women's education has not been even so much as properly felt by our countrymen. Their lack of interest and, sometimes, their opposition, have prevented the government from paying due attention to the education of the women of India. That accounts for the backwardness of girls in education in comparison with boys, and for the fact that the ratio of education between women

and men is hardly 5:100.—HER HIGHNESS THE BEGUM-MOTHER OF BHOPAL. Presidential Speech at the Second Women's Educational Conference, Delhi, 1928.

Women in India have plenty of native intelligence; what they lack is the development and training which education alone can provide. . . . So far, education has made very little progress among our women. The proportion of literates to the total woman population is only a little over one in a hundred. Even this is contributed mostly by progressive sections like the Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Malayalis, Parsis and Brahmos.—MRS. PARVATI CHANDRASEKHARA AIYAR, first woman member, Bangalore District Board. *Stri-Dharma*, July, 1927. P. 132.

THE WIDOW

Countless is the number of unhappy women condemned to widowhood even before they have ceased to be children. The sin and misery of it all is indescribable. And is it to be said that there is to be no alleviation, no remedy, no end to all this wretchedness and iniquity? Can such things which are a disgrace to the sacred land of India be tolerated by her sons any longer? Social reform, it is true, is difficult work, and the populace will inevitably discredit and malign the pioneers in this field.—MRS. PARVATI CHANDRASEKHARA AIYAR. *Stri-Dharma*, August, 1927. P. 149.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

THE WIDOW

A sun-cracked Bengali plain, streaked with the long bright shadows of early morning. A solitary thatched-roofed hut of smooth grey clay. In its doorway, squatting, a woman swathed in white. Over beyond, half-veiled in floating dust, the grey clay village that makes her world.

Sita, the woman, by count of the calendar, has lived through twenty-nine years. By count of the Brahmanic code, she is the ancient survival of an ancient sin. By count of her mind, she is a child.

Her fleshless cheeks, drawn like a mummy's, expose the contour of her teeth. Her short cropped hair that should be black is coarse and grizzled grey. Each tendon of her little hands stands out alone. Her great dark eyes stare void—eyes of a doomed animal that, having exhausted both pain and fear, knows there is no hope.

As for this hut, her home: One room. Clay floor and walls, cow-dung smeared. No window. A bare corded cot. A water-jar. A food-pot suspended

from a peg beside the door. A grinding-stone. And that is all.

Her life belongs to the past. For hours each day through long drab years she has stared back into the past, seeing pictures without purpose. Today, having risen with the dawn, having done her ceremonial bathing, having offered to the gods her ceremonial prayer, she sits in the doorway idle. What more is there to do? And, as ever, the pictures begin to come.

She sees herself a little child, happy in an affluent home, her mother's pet till a baby brother comes to fill all eyes. Then the women of the household take her in hand, teaching her all that a Hindu girl-child needs to know—the iron-bound rules of her caste that control each act of life, to break which is damnation; the prayers and propitiations of the gods lest they, who lie always in wait, find excuse to do one a harm; the duties of the wife to the husband, her personal god; the supplications that that husband be provided duly.

For the rest, to fill her days, just small games—and the talk of the women endlessly revolving all that they knew of life. They spoke of child-bearing, much of pain, and sometimes of disease that could eat their bodies with sores.

Somehow, the horror of flesh so defaced laid hold on the thought of the listening child—became in time the demon that haunted her sleep and awoke her nightly, sick and shivering. Secretly she dwelt on it, till, terror-driven, she framed a prayer all her own, adding to the ritual.

"Great Ones," day by day she repeated, under her breath, "givers of sons and gold and houses and cattle and all good gifts, to me you have given but one thing—this small body, in which I serve. Of your mercy, then, I beseech you, keep this my body clean, uncankered, undefiled."

Also, of course, she prayed for a husband, laying her little offerings of toys or fruits or flowers before the shrine. And in due season the husband had been procured, from the proper caste circle, not without payment of much money in dowry. In haste, they sent her home to him just before her twelfth birthday, the signs of womanhood having come upon her.

Well she recalled that "home-going." Her little mother and the women of the household had often told her all that it meant, yet somehow her child mind, for all the familiarity of the words, had escaped realization. Such a big man, such an old, fat man, was Bimal her husband!

Much bigger, much older than her father; and she at twelve was such a tiny thing!

Four wives had come before her, this new household said. But all had died barren. Now she, Sita, must surely give the master a son.

"I will pray the gods without ceasing," said little Sita, obedient, trembling. And so she prayed, yet always added her secret prayer: "Uncankered, Great Ones! Undefiled!"

A year passed. Childhood had vanished. Her frame had scarcely increased, all her vitality being daily sapped away.

"You grow thin and ugly and dull," the women mocked her, "and you bear no fruit. Our master will soon discard such a tree and set another in its place."

Yet Fate worked otherwise in the mind of Bimal her husband, who one day said:

"Tomorrow I send you to the temple of Kali, to pray that you give me a son. All day shall you pray, where the priests assign you. At night, you shall sleep where the priests assign you. After that you shall return to me, and in due season bring to birth him, the long-awaited, that shall save my soul from hell."

So the serving-folk had taken her to Kali's

temple, cooped in the curtained bullock-cart, as became the station of a rich man's wife, that none might see her face. All day in the temple she besought the goddess. And at night, filled with fear, she lay where the priest bade her, in a dark place apart.

"Had you a dream in the night season?" that priest inquired when morning came.

"Not a dream, but a strong Presence that visited me," she had answered. "And the voice of the Presence was like the voice of my lord priest."

"Give thanks to Kali. It was a god," quoth the other. "Return to your husband and bid him send me much money at the birth of the child."

But alas, the child when it came was a girl!

Years passed. Despite a second visit to the temple no other child was vouchsafed. And life became one long dull pain—to be borne with meekness, the will of the blessed gods.

"Yet, for all the pain, have they heard my own prayer!" she would whisper. "Yet have they ever protected me from the Horror that Eateth the Flesh. They have kept my body clean!" And the thought stayed her secret soul to patience and peace.

Bimal, meantime, despairing, had adopted a son, that his skull might be cracked on the funeral pyre by a hand within the circle of the law.

As for the little daughter that Kali sent, she had been duly trained, duly married like her mother before her, and duly sent home in her eleventh year to her husband's house.

Then Bimal died, because of the sins of Sita his wife. What sins? In vain through succeeding years she had sought to discover them. They belonged to some former incarnation, of which the gods had wiped her memory clean.

But if a man dies, is it not always because of the sins of the wife who survives him? Wherefore she walks justly accursed of all orthodox Hindudom, a slave, a rightless thing of evil omen, till death releases the earth of her weight.

Obeying the explicit Hindu code, they had taken away her marriage token, had cut off her long black hair and shaved her head, had stripped her of all her jewels and her clothing. Then clad in a single mantle—a *sari* of white cotton cloth—widows' wear—they had turned her into the street to beg. In which they, the rightful heirs, while saving to themselves all Bimal's hoard, did but emphasize the verdict of high Destiny.

But the gods had relented. Sarat, her daughter's husband, a generous man, had lent her this clay hut, apart from the village, to shelter her head. More still, Sarat gave her coppers, now and again, enough to buy her the one scant meal a day that is widows' fare. And, on the days when she walked to the village market to find her food, Sarat even consented that she creep into her daughter's presence, no festival being on foot to be marred by her evil eye, that she might assure herself of her little one's continued well-being.

Otherwise, what may any widow do, but keep all day at her prayers for the soul of her lord? By diligent prayer, fasting and privation, she may perhaps win him a higher place in his next incarnation upon earth.

And if Sita's life, thought by thought, move by move, was fore-ordained in immemorial law, so also was the thought and deed of that little Hindu village lying over beyond in the sun-gilt dust. Landlords, cultivators of the soil, artisans and outcast slaves, its sluggish human stream ebbed down the centuries as an echo eternally fainter, eternally dying, eternally one.

Yet, not sixty miles removed, big modern Calcutta, largest city of India, stewed on the fires of

political unrest. For this was the autumn of 1921. In the very streets of the capital secret plotters and killers vied with open assassins to terrorize all who opposed the will of the new-made saint, Gandhi, then at the zenith of his power. And though the saint himself continued to preach "non-violence," his speech, day by day, was the speech that breeds hatred and destruction and drives simple folk to the spilling of blood.

Yet, save where young city-bred politicals had run abroad swinging the torch, great India in her hamlets slept the sleep of the ages, aloof and unconcerned.

Unconcerned lay Sita's village, when, this sun-up, two young strangers appeared in haste, demanding audience. Little white rabbit-caps they wore on their heads and their tongues were hot. So the people, wondering, led them before the head man, to recite their tale.

"What is this ye babble!" the head man scoffed through his long grey beard, having heard them through. "Will ye feed my people thistles? 'The British came with the scales in their hand, and sat down with the sword,' say ye? And therefore folk like us 'must rise against them and destroy all the cloth that their ships have brought, and drive them

out!' Go back speedily to the knaves that sent ye and tell them this:

" 'It is true that the sahibs came to trade and remained to rule. *But whose is the advantage?* Think ye we here be so thick of skull that we tire of peace and justice and desire you, robbers, set to rule us in the sahibs' place?'

"And now begone in haste, lest my *chokidars* break your heads."

So the young men left, but with wrath in their hearts, having failed in their errand.

And it chanced as they pushed across the fields, seeking the highroad, that they came upon a solitary hut, and a woman in a white *sari* issuing from the door of the hut.

"Who art thou?" called the strangers.

"I am the widow," a frightened voice returned.

"Whither goest thou?"

"Even to the market, to buy food."

"And what is this thou wearest, thou thing of foul omen!" cried one of the strangers, laying hold upon her garment. "A Manchester-made *sari*, by the gods!"

"What is Manchester?" asked the widow. "It is my *sari*, the only one I have."

"You must give it up, none the less, and let us

burn it. Off with it! Quick!" And he wrenched at the cloth.

But Sita clutched it tight about her, covering her face. "Who says I must take it off?" she panted.

"Mahatma Gandhi."

"Who is Mahatma Gandhi?"

"He who can curse. And if you do not instantly give us your *sari*, cursed you shall be—"

Sita stood dazed. According to the law of widows, she wore but one garment. To remove it were to strip herself naked before these men.

"You will not? Then on your head be it!" cried the stranger. "Cursed you are, in the name of Mahatma Gandhi whose disciples we be. Cursed you are, with the curse of leprosy. It begins on your forehead, moving slowly, slowly, down your spine, eating, eating all your flesh away in sores. See! See! The marks are there, on your finger-tips, now!"

With a shriek Sita turned and fled into the hut, tore off her *sari* and threw it from the door into the strangers' hands.

"Take back the curse! Take back the curse!" she screamed. But they, laughing, sped on their way.

Three days passed.

"Where is Sita the widow?" asked the market folk. "She comes not for food."

"Where is my mother?" asked Sarat's wife.

And Sarat, the kindly, answered, "For thy peace I will go to the hut and see."

But the door of the hut was shut. "O Mother-in-law, art thou within?" called Sarat.

No reply.

"O Mother-in-law, art thou ill?"

No reply.

"O Mother-in-law, thou art surely ill!" And Sarat opened the door.

In the far corner, crouched on the floor, a skeleton figure, naked, quaking, staring with great burning eyes at its outstretched finger-tips. The fever-cracked lips formed words—but to what sense?

"O Great Ones! O Great Ones! Not clean! Not clean!"

"What meaneth this!" cried the man.

"The two young men, disciples of one Gandhi—a saint—who sent them to take my *sari*—to burn my *sari* in fire—and because I would have kept it they cursed me in the name of their saint

—cursed with a filthy curse that consumeth all the body in sores. It beginneth at the finger-tips—here—O Son-in-law, look! Canst see the marks? *Are the Great Ones dead?*" And the dry voice strangled in a gasp.

But Sarat, averting his eyes, tore off his scarf and threw it toward her. "Cover thyself, O Mother-in-law. I go to fetch thy daughter to comfort thee." He closed the door and ran.

When he returned, an hour later, with women and clothing and food, that door turned slowly on its hinges because against it, swinging with the empty food-jar from the peg, hung a small limp body—dead—choked with the noose of the scarf.

The culmination of a woman's tragedy is in her widowhood. In former times numbers of them were burnt with their husbands. An early Governor-General stopped this practice. Sir John Woodroffe objects to references to this obsolete custom in judging present-day Hindu society. He would be right if Indians themselves had stopped this practice as westerners stopped the burning of witches. But it was not Hindu humanity but British legislation that ended *Sati* (Suttee). Hindus only sent petitions to Parliament protesting against interferences with their sacred usages. But the lot of the Hindu widow continues to be the tragic spectacle it ever was.—N. YAGNESVARA SASTRY. "The Tragedy of Women's Life in India," *Stri-Dharma*, July, 1928.

False analogies are often drawn between the widows of India and the nuns of Europe. But nuns become so of their own volition, but behind the Hindu widow there is social coercion. Nuns take

their step in the maturity of their judgment, but widows in India are often mere children. It is a proximation to God that draws a nun to her Savior, but it is a separation from the human being that makes the widow what she is. And above all a nun is respected, but widows are not. —*Ibid.*

A Hindu woman does not get any share in her father's property—share in the sense of property of which she becomes absolute owner—nor does she get any in her husband's.

. . . In practice a widow in Hindu society . . . even though her husband may have the entire wealth of the family and she may, during his life time, have lived a life of affluence and luxury, as soon as he dies, the entire property goes to the surviving male members of the family and she becomes thenceforth only entitled to maintenance which, as popularly understood, denotes bare means of living.—*Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay, August 11, 1928. "Widows' Right of Inheritance."

There are over twenty million Hindu widows in India today. See *Census of India*, 1921.

A SLAVE OF THE GODS

In India the dancing-girls dedicated to the service of the Tamil temples take the name of *devadasis*, "Servants or slaves of the gods," but in common parlance they are spoken of simply as harlots. Every Tamil temple of note in India has its troop of these sacred women.—J. G. FRAZER. *The Golden Bough, Adonis Attis Osiris.* Vol. I. P. 61.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

A SLAVE OF THE GODS

The Governor was on tour, inspecting his province. His wife, newly out from England, accompanied him. And for her sake it was that a visit to the famous old Hindu temple figured in this day's program.

Respectfully the priests conducted their guests as far as any non-Hindu may go, through the massive-columned chambers that lie before the Shrine. Respectfully Her Excellency praised the rich masses of carving and colour, the grandeur of proportion and design. And if now she shrank from the Goddess Awarder of Smallpox whose breasts dripped rancid butter cast upon them in handfuls by suppliants for safety or cure, it was because too much rancid butter and too much smallpox, with the mercury at ninety degrees in the shade, taxed her yet unaccustomed nerves.

With a suppressed movement of escape she turned toward the great closed place of the Holy of Holies, whither a waft of music now drew her eyes. And behold, within the shadows of the pil-

lars, a lovely sight—a group of temple women, beautiful of face, beautiful of garment, beautiful of posture, following the rhythm of the instruments with song.

Then out from that group moved a fairy figure—a child, clad in a long white robe embroidered in thread of gold. Splendid jewels weighted her neck and arms and ankles; flowers crowned her hair. She carried a garland of sacred marigold blossoms, which, having prostrated herself in obeisance before the Great Lady, she offered with all graceful modesty, in her outstretched hands.

But Her Excellency, who understood nothing, being new in the land, yet felt a tug at her heart-strings. The tiny figure was so frail, the rose-leaf mouth so sad, the velvet cheeks so wan beneath their rouge, the lines of breeding and intelligence so over-emphasized. And somehow, as she looked, the unconscious intentness of her gaze lifted the long black lashes till the little one's eyes rested full on her own.

For an instant they stood so—the lady seeming to search into the depths of the child's soul—the child with dilating pupils and parted lips supporting the search in a sort of devouring tension—

until some signal broke the spell. With a quick sigh of awakening the small flower-bearer, rising from another deep obeisance, turned and glided away. And the priests, moving forward, led their guests to other scenes.

But the work was done.

Lakshmi, floating her mind at ease, could remember fragments of experience from her fourth year forward. Now she was seven. She remembered her mother's face—the fine-cut face of a high-bred Brahman. She remembered her mother's voice, moaning over and over:

"Little daughter, what is to become of you? How am I, a poor widow, to find you a dowry? How, without dowry, can you be wed? Yet not to be wed were shame—worse, far, than death."

Then she remembered her mother's cough, and how bad it grew; and how a Sahib doctor-lady came to help. Sometimes that doctor-lady said: "You must lie still and rest. Let me take baby Lakshmi home. When I come tomorrow I will bring her back."

Then followed another memory, as familiar—a memory of a big lighted room, of many people in the room, singing, or praying new prayers, and

of certain few words, oft repeated, that somehow stood out from the rest.

"What does it mean?" she had asked the doctor-lady. "What means 'Lighten-our-darkness-we-beseech-thee-O-Lord-and-by-thy-great-mercy-defend-us-from-all-perils-and-dangers-of-this-night-for-the-love-of-thy-only-Son-our-Saviour-Jesus-Christ—'?"

And though the doctor-lady had given her the meaning of the words in the Indian tongue, yet the strange originals themselves had remained imprinted on her sensitive child-brain.

After that came a day when the poor mother grew suddenly worse. But the doctor-lady was gone a journey. And a pretty Hindu lady in a pretty dress, with many shining bracelets, had come. A *deva-dasi*, she was called. And she told wonderful tales.

Then, "You, too, are soon going a journey," this new friend said to Mother, whose eyes were grown so big and burning bright, "and if you let me take little Lakshmi, I will fit her to be married to the gods, and she shall have beautiful dresses and jewels to wear, and she will be honoured and admired. And never, never, can she be a widow, a thing of ill-omen, like you.

"See how fair she is of skin, how delicate is her nose, how clear her promise of intelligence and beauty! I will make her so full of grace that the greatest Brahmans will stand fixed in admiration before her and shower her with gold and praise. Give her to me."

But Lakshmi, strangely frightened, clung to her mother's knees. "Don't send me away!" she wept. And the mother wept with her, clutching her in her arms. Yet she said, at last:

"I submit. For it is true I go a journey and must go alone. And though my heart misgives me, yet surely it cannot be wrong to leave my little one to the holy gods."

"Quick!" cried the other, "here is the joy-gift, to seal the bond!"—and Lakshmi heard a clink of coin. "Great merit have you now with the gods."

Then the rocking and racking of the bullock-cart, on the long highroad—and, in the dusk behind its curtains, a weary, frightened child sobbing herself to sleep on the pretty lady's knees.

After that, just the great Hindu temple, and the temple house, where many other children dwelt in training for marriage to the gods. Such pretty creatures, all—chosen for their beauty and natural grace. And every day came the hours of

suppling the little bodies with oil and skilful rubbings, came the lessons in dancing, came the reading lessons in order that long, long books of poetry might be learned by heart. Thus, every temple child grows learned beyond all women of old India.

But the poetry, even though it concerned the gods, made many pictures that troubled Lakshmi's heart. Not knowing why, she turned against it.

"I will learn no more!" one day she exclaimed.

"Will not?" smiled her new mother.

Then came the first real whipping of her life.

Other children sometimes struggled, too. There had been Tara, who was big—almost ten years old; Tara, whose father, a rich man, had given her to the gods, to acquire merit and in prayer for a son. Tara was always unhappy.

"You don't understand," one day she had said to Lakshmi, "but I understand, now. I am not a coward. They shall not make me do it. You shall see."

That night, from one of the inner chambers, came piercing shrieks of a little child, first in anger, then in agony.

"That is little Esli! He is mad to take her so

soon. She is too valuable to destroy in the making!" Lakshmi heard her "mother" murmur.

But Tara whispered: "Esli is so pretty—what if she *is* younger than you? That didn't save her. The priest couldn't wait. Now remember and watch: My time has come. *I* save *myself*."

Next morning they found her body in the well —drowned.

Lakshmi's own training centred around the temple drama. And by the time she was ready to appear in public she already understood as much as a child can of the significance of word and act—yet with an instinctive revolt which, where once it had existed in the others, had for the most part been either cowed into submission or rotted away by the influences in the air.

Never could she forget that first moment on the stage—the nightmare of loathing and fear that had filled her in advance—then the upflare of light, the burst of music—and the flash of unexpected memory: Memory of another big room, filled with light, filled with people—memory of other music. Before she knew what she did, she had dropped on her knees.

"Lighten-our-darkness-we-beseech-thee-O-

Lord-and-by-thy-great-mercy-defend-us-from-all-perils-and-dangers-of-this-night-for-the-love-of-thy-only-Son-our-Saviour-Jesus-Christ!" she was repeating, wildly, when the woman beside her pulled her upright with an admonitory pinch that brought the blood.

After that, when the lights flared up and the music broke forth, she kept her feet—but the words sprang to her lips. "My own *mantra*—my own charm!" she called them in her heart. And something within her seemed to survive thereon.

But now she was old—seven years old. Already they had "married" her to the god—and if, till today, she had missed Esli's fate, before much longer it surely must claim her. Under ever-present foreboding her child-soul sickened and sank.

Then, as out of the blue, in the temple itself and before the very door of the Inmost Shrine, had come the summons—the silent summons in the Great Lady's eyes.

"She called me! Her spirit called me! I must go. I dare not wait." Over and over through the remainder of that day the child had whispered to herself.

So at nightfall, shrouding her bright raiment with a servant's scarf, she contrived with mouse-

like cunning to slip out of the house and lose herself in the mass of pilgrims pressing to and fro through the temple streets.

In and out through the crowd she wove, knowing nothing of way or place, conscious only of the terror at her back. To run she dared not, lest some one ask her why. Yet, presently, seeing beyond the temple purlieus a wider, less peopled street, she darted toward it, in the instinct for space.

But just as she cleared the press of traffic, some idler's hand, snatching at her scarf, tore it away, exposing her telltale temple dress.

"A *deva-dasi!* A Slave of the Gods! A runaway!" shouted the idler, giving chase. And the pilgrim pack turned after him in full cry.

Lakshmi ran—ran—ran—as fast as fear could speed her. Her heart hammered cold in her throat. The world whirled around her. "Lighten-our-darkness—defend-us—perils-and-dangers—" she panted. But they gained—they were closing in upon her—her strength was spent . . .

And then it happened.

Out of a doorway stepped a lady—her face was white. Lakshmi saw the face—and with one last sobbing cry sprang into the lady's out-stretched

arms. "For-the-love-of-our-Saviour-Jesus-Christ," she gasped aloud, and fainted dead away.

The lady faced the crowd. "What means all this?" she demanded.

"It is a *deva-dasi*—a temple prostitute. She belongs to our gods. She has run away. Give her to us! Give her here! We will take her back to the Brahmans," shouted many voices, half frenzied, wholly threatening.

But the lady seemed to grow suddenly tall.

"This child has claimed my help in the name of Jesus Christ, *my* Lord," the words rang like a bell, clear and slow. "Fall back!"

For a moment she so confronted them. Then, for all their numbers and their fury, they faltered, broke and melted from before her till she stood alone, with the child in her arms.

"It was my own *mantra*—my charm—that worked," said Lakshmi, afterward. "Now what can I do for your Lord? Can I dance for Him, and sing?"

Yet for a full year thereafter one who knew and understood had to sleep, to eat, to live with the child, to clear her mind of the rank weeds so skilfully sown in thought and speech and deed.

Lakshmi, now, is what you would have her—a happy, hearty, wholesome child, living in love-nurtured peace.

As for the lady who rose in her path that night, she spends her life in the rescue of little Slaves of the Gods. But even today her work, because of the hatreds and dangers that surround it, must be done in the silence of namelessness, lest it be killed.

There are, I am sorry to say, many temples in our midst in this country which are no better than brothels.—GANDHI. Quoted in *Young India.* October 6, 1927. P. 335.

Always the one who is to dance before the gods is given to the life when she is very young. Otherwise she could not be properly trained. Many babies are brought by their parents and given to Temple women for the sake of merit. It is very meritorious to give a child to the gods. Often the parents are poor but of good caste.—AMY WILSON-CARMICHAEL. *Lotus Buds*, London, Morgan and Scott. First printed, 1909. P. 258.

When the old devadasis become sterile, which they very often are by the nature of their profession, they buy girls from other caste-Hindus and so, every Hindu community [caste] at one time or other shares in the degradation and misery of such a life.—DR. [MRS.] S. MUTHULAKSHMI

REDDI. *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras.* November 4, 1927. P. 416.

It is revolting to all human feeling that a girl as soon as she is 6 or 8 or 10 years of age, and in a majority of cases before she obtains her puberty, should be exposed to this life-long vice [as prostitute at the disposition of priests and temple visitors].—DR. HARI SINGH GOUR. *Legislative Assembly Debates,* 1922, Vol. 11. Pt. 11. P. 2601.

No respectable person would dedicate his young girl or his young child to a temple, throw her to the tender mercies of regular prostitutes or put her in such unfavourable and loathsome environments except with the object of seeing her turned out as a prostitute.—SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY. *Council of State Debates,* Simla, September 12, 1927. P. 1138.

. . . A girl in her childhood is told to look upon prostitution as a career. Not only is she repeatedly told that it is her religious duty to follow this disreputable profession, and therefore cannot get married, but the atmosphere around her is so

created that she hates marriage and married life. —MR. P. G. NAIK, Bombay Social Service League. Quoted in *The Pioneer*, Allahabad, November 11, 1928.

The Devadasi community of Madras alone numbers two hundred thousand members.—From the *Manifesto to the Madras Government by the Members of the Devadasi Association*, Aurora Press, Madras, 1927. P. 8.

Raising the consent age above 14 in extra-marital cases would be unfair to 'devadasis' as that would prevent their earning livelihood.—Testimony of Mr. Pandit, Assistant Commissioner of Belgaum. Age of Consent Committee, Poona Hearing. Associated Press despatch, *Bombay Daily Mail*, November 5, 1928.

THE UNDER DOG

You may breed cows and dogs in your houses, you may drink the urine of cows and swallow cow dung to expiate your sins, but you shall not even approach an Adi-Dravida (Untouchable).—Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah. *The Oppressed Hindus.* Huxley Press, Madras, 1925. P. 6.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

"Finally," the Surgeon General concluded, "in assigning you to so responsible a post, I would impress upon you this axiom:

"*In every official dealing here in India* (a) *keep your feelings entirely out of it;* and, (b) *never, with any Indian, lose your temper.* Once a man starts letting his sympathies be played upon, they soon rack him to pieces. Similarly, if he loses his temper with an Indian he loses prestige. Both habits destroy usefulness.—And—ah—one more point you will find it extraordinarily useful to observe: almost every act, habit or characteristic of the Hindu that tends to impede one's work has its root in the Hindu religious code. And with that code we are specially pledged and commanded in no way to interfere."

"Thank you, Sir," responded young Hapgood, as in duty bound.

Yet his mind protested, contemptuously: "Lucky the Queen's Proclamation did give that pledge! Cold blooded old snob! No more imag-

ination, no more spiritual understanding, no more breadth of human sympathy than a lobster. It's just such intolerant old Calvinists that with their cursed superiority complex, drive the sensitive Indian soul to despair."

In the full flush of which sentiment he had embarked on his official career as Resident Consulting Surgeon of the big municipal hospital, having immediately under him some dozen young Hindu house-surgeons and physicians as staff.

And from these, whom he came to lead, he at once began to learn.

"The East has much to teach the West," they often told him.

"The better part of which is patience," he one day unexpectedly snapped back.

But that was after a long, hard morning during which, while Hapgood slaved over the operating table, the house staff had let two ward patients die in their beds from sheer lack of common care.

"It appears that both the deceased were likely to die in any case," observed Chatterji, M.D., senior house physician, in comment on Hapgood's upbraiding. "Also, they came of very low caste."

Hapgood stared. "Is that last remark relevant?" he enquired.

"Caste considerations," rejoined the Brahman, as one mildly shocked, "are always relevant to everything. Caste is our spiritual Gibraltar. Some day the West may grow to understand. Our ancient East has much to teach the West."

Hapgood smote the bell on the table before him.

"Order my horse," he barked to the messenger who appeared in the office door.

His head ached, his heart ached, his judgment faltered. His job, for very newness, was creaking stiff in his hand. Things seemed headed awry. The hot season had lately set in, bringing increased nervous tension. The depression of latent malaria hung heavy upon him. Irritability and discouragement threatened his precious poise.

"I won't risk more words, now," he thought. "I'll ride—ride hard and long, and sweat the devil out of me. Perhaps then with a more tolerant mind I can see their point of view."

And when, indeed, toward evening, he neared the city again, so sternly had he dealt with his misgivings that he could even have written a eulogium on the caste-system itself.

"Surprise phenomena may distort the vision for a moment," he was saying to himself, as his mount

padded softly along the empty highroad. "And modern misinterpretations confuse. But the beauty of the old wisdom eternally remains, to awe the reverent seeker. And who, after all, shall say which is the better teaching—which the higher rule of life? Who dare say that God has spoken less clearly through his Krishna than through his Christ?"

But there his speculations, like his solitude, ended. For the highroad, branching sharply to become a palm-arched causeway spanning marshes, showed no longer empty, but populous with near-advancing forms—dark-skinned men trudging wearily, each bearing on his shoulder the tools of those who till the soil.

And again, more immediately in the foreground, half-hidden by the palm against whose trunk he lay dozing, Hapgood discovered another figure—that of a well-dressed Indian gentleman overtaken, no doubt, by lassitude, in the course of an afternoon's stroll. Which gentleman, awaking at the sound of approach, but without stirring from his place, now emitted one large and raucous cry like the sound of a klaxon horn.

At that sound, as though a machine-gun had been trained upon them, the approaching labourers

abandoned the highroad, springing from its either side into the marsh, there frantically to wallow farther and farther away, slipping and falling between tussock and tussock, half-submerged in the stagnant ooze, but each the while, with his hand held as a shield before his mouth, shouting at the top of his lungs some single word.

Hapgood, checking his horse, looked on amazed. And, while he looked, the Indian gentleman arose from his rest, stalked down the centre of the now-empty road, and, glancing neither to right nor to left, disappeared toward town.

Then, slime-coated, dripping mud, the labourers struggled back to the King's Highway.

"What is the meaning of this?" Hapgood demanded, in the vernacular, of one who seemed leader of the rest. "Why did you all run away from before that fellow? What word did you shout, and what betokens, in shouting, the holding of the hand before the mouth?"

Humbly the old man answered:

"Does not the Sahib see? Are we not Untouchables all? We fled from before the Brahman because our nearness pollutes all Brahmans, bringing down upon us at their word the deadly curse of their gods.

"As to the word of our cry, it is: 'Unclean! Unclean!' ordained that all Brahmans may be warned exactly of our whereabouts. And the hand held before the mouth in crying, that, may it please the Gracious One, is lest Brahman purity be sullied by our shouting-projected breath."

"Where are you going now?" asked Hapgood, grimly.

"To our homes, close yonder in the jungle."

"I will follow."

Until far into evening Hapgood sat in their council-place listening and asking questions, while the men and the children squatted around him and the women furtively peered from the inner night of the encircling huts. Bugs feasted on him. Mosquitoes clustered thick on his white-clad shoulders, and, when he mechanically struck at them, spread across the whiteness long splashes of his blood. The air was sick with evil smells. But Hapgood, oblivious of physical sensations, still bored away after facts.

For, although most of what he elicited was already abstractly familiar to him, to hear it now, from the victims themselves, endued it with new force.

"You are dirty—beastly dirty," he said at last. "At least you could wash."

"May it please the Sahib, we have no well."

"Then bring water from the wells of the village beyond."

"Nay, those are the wells of the caste folk. If we approached their wells, thereby polluting them, they would punish us bitterly. And we, soul-guilty, were eternally accursed."

"Dig wells for yourselves, then."

"Nay, also. For we may neither own land nor control it."

"How, then, do you get water?"

"From mud holes and marshes, when such be. Otherwise our women walk, half a day's journey, to the water-station of the railroad and there await the coming of the train. For the enginemen are Muslims, and, when they fill their engine's need, will also mercifully fill our women's jars."

"How can your children go to school, filthy as they are?"

"Sahib, our children may never truly go to school, be they washed ever so clean. Yes, we know that Government gives schools for all. But mostly the caste people find means to outwit Gov-

ernment, where a child of ours approaches a child of caste."

"What wages do you earn?" persisted the catechist.

"Two annas (four cents) a day."

"But the railroad," urged Hapgood, "offers twice that, and needs labour."

"True, but useless. For our Brahman master, holding us in bonds of ancient usury, forbids us to quit his land and his service to sell our labour elsewhere."

"Why, then, if all else fails, do not the Brahman priests, the holy men of the great Hindu temples, intercede with your landlord for you?"

"Alas! Does not the Sahib know? No priest intercedes for us, whatever our misery. Are not all present pains but just awards—imposed by the Brahmans' gods, for sins committed in previous lives? Does not the Sahib know that for the Unclean so much as to enter a temple,—so much as to covet teaching from the sacred books, though he be thirsting for knowledge and worship of the gods, is sacrilege whose fruit is torment everlasting?"

As Hapgood listened, his emotions showed clearly enough on his frank young face—anger,

revolt, pity, and finally that rage of unity with the under-dog that characterizes his type.

Of which the circle of glittering eyes surrounding him lost not a sign.

"Sahib though he be, he is an Outcaste like ourselves," one said to another. "Look! Look how he sorrows with us!"

"Ay, verily,—behold! a Sahib, but an Outcaste, like ourselves," the murmur, gathering conviction, spread.

Then suddenly a child's voice, soaring high and clear:

"Nay, then, nay! This is no Outcaste like us! I know him! I know him! The new Sahib God, of whom we heard but yesterday! He of whom the white priest spoke—He whose heart turns above all things toward children—even children like me!—"

And on the wings of the cry a little naked figure, rushing forward out of the circle, fell face downward in the dust at Hapgood's feet.

"What does this mean?" asked Hapgood, aghast.

It was the old headman who answered, slowly, "It is true, a priest of the Christians passed this way—tarries near here now. But we are ignorant

folk and his words we have mostly forgotten. Yet he did speak of a New God—who should surely come—who careth especially for little children and for the poor and afflicted, such as we. Art thou, indeed, then, He of whom that white priest spoke?"

But Hapgood scarcely heard. For he was lifting the little figure up from the dust—holding it in his arms, looking into its face.—A sensitive face, for all its black skin and its dirt-clotted mane of hair—and behind the big dark eyes deep wells of hungry love.

Somehow, as he looked, his mind went flashing back around the world. What sewer-rat of France, what gutter-snipe of Britain, what wretchedest negro slave-brat under the worst Legree of America, what living creature in any Christian land, had ever so foul a destiny!

"You men,"—suddenly stirred, he turned to the circle, still holding the child in the crook of his arm,—"I call you men—but because of this monstrous creed of yours, you live not like men but like worms. Have you no manhood? No courage? Are you worms indeed? You say a Christian priest has passed this way—is near here now. Why do you not go, all of you, straight to that priest,

take on the Christian faith, and be rid forever of all this wicked tyranny. *Why not?*"

But the hearers shook their heads. Again the head-man spoke:

"It might be well, but we dare not. For the Brahman our master sent us word, the very day of the coming of the priest, that any of us presuming to seek freedom through the New God should suffer many ills. He should be turned out of his hut, refused all work, cursed with devils and disease. We know our master. He would keep that pledge, and more also."

Meantime, the boy's adoring eyes had never quitted Hapgood's face. "O Perfect One," now he breathed, "*is* the New God Thyself?"

"Laddie, listen: I am only the English doctor Sahib, from the great hospital over there in the city, beyond the marsh. But"—and suddenly Hapgood knew his own colours beyond all shadow of doubt—"that New God is my God, the One God, the God of Love and of Mercy, not of Cruelty or of Fear."

The child smiled, happily. "I know," he murmured. "I see, I feel."

Next day Hapgood put to Dr. Chatterji the

question: "How many Untouchables are there supposed to be in India?"

"Statistics on the point are somewhat uncertain," responded Chatterji, whose hobby was statistics. "But most reliable source would estimate sixty millions, approximate; a goodly number, and useful, very useful and necessary, to our ancient social scheme."

Then followed a month of intense activity both administrative and professional, during which Hapgood's strength, in the unremitting heat, was taxed to its uttermost. In the course of the last day he served eighteen hours on duty, long after midnight turning to his bed too tired to sleep.

On the following morning, having finished routine inspection of the main hospital, he started toward his out-patient pavilion uncomfortably conscious of the edge of his nerves. Entering the house-surgeon's waiting-room, he paused therefore, and stood for a moment looking out at the window, bent on re-establishing his balance before meeting the staff who, laughing and chatting together, awaited him in the office beyond.

And there, as he stood, his attention was suddenly caught by an object lying out in the compound some twenty yards away—a motionless ob-

ject stretched on the ground, sagging half over the edge of a large open drain.

"What is that, there?" he asked, sharply, calling to the group of doctors. "It seems uncommonly like a child."

"O-ah, yes, it is a child," observed one, pleasantly, as they gathered to look over the chief's shoulder.

"You all knew he was there? Did you examine him?"

"O-ah, yes, we knew he was there. Certainly, we have examined him. He has fever—very much fever."

"Indeed! And so you leave him lying in the blazing sun? And so none of you, now, intends to do anything whatever about it? Not even to push him into the drain and let him drown?"

He had thought, in his swift flare of anger, to sting them into shame. But silence was their only reply. His heat shocked them.

Then out spoke one having an English medical degree. Patiently he spoke, without rancour, as one dealing with the innocently obtuse.

"It appears, sir, that he is a child from some low-caste village near by. There is no room in the wards—"

"*Room in the wards!*" shouted Hapgood, fairly at the end of his tether. "If he were a high-caste child would you have left him like that? If he were a Brahman would you? *When* will you men learn there is *always* room, *somewhere*, for every—"

But without staying to finish the sentence he himself had rushed the distance and was bending over that dark heap sagging into the drain.

A child indeed—a boy—a little naked boy, perhaps twelve years old—black of skin, with a dirt-matted mane of hair. Hapgood, in the last few weeks, had seen hundreds such, yet—"Laddie!" he whispered—"Laddie!"—and the child's eyes opened.

Big, unseeing eyes, drugged and drowsy with fever fires.

"Laddie!" whispered Hapgood, again. "Laddie! Listen! Wake up!"

Then slowly the spirit answered, the lips half smiled—the eyes grew clear—came suddenly aglow with the light of recognition.

"*My* Sahib!" The voice just sufficed to form the words. "The way was long—but I came—to tell thee—to tell thee— We sought thy priest.

For thy words made hot our hearts. And behold thy God is even now the God of me and mine. But for that cause the Brahman our master with violence drove us forth from our village and burned our huts and our all. So I came—seeking thee—my Sahib. And now I go—to a better place. —Remain with me, my Sahib, for it grows dark, —and—I—go, I—go—away—"

The whisper ceased, as the head fell back on Hapgood's arm.

When Hapgood walked through the office, carrying the boy, he was staggering queerly under so light a weight. And he was raving mad.

"You cowards! You damn scoundrels!" he flung at the amazed Brahmans. "*You* call yourselves *doctors!* Never in a thousand years! The spirit of a doctor is as far from you as pole from pole! *You* call this boy unclean! Not one of you cads is worthy to touch a hair of his head. Keep clear, damn you all, keep clear!"

But he need not have feared their approach. Not one moved to relieve him of his burden. Alone he laid the little body upon an empty cot, then slid, himself unconscious, to the floor at its side.

An uncommonly stiff malarial paroxysm it proved to be. But Hapgood is made of resistant mettle, and when, a fortnight later, the Surgeon General summoned him in conference, he was thoroughly on his feet again.

"And now," said the Surgeon General, in conclusion, "I have to tell you that a complaint lies before me, signed by several members of your staff, saying that you have intensely wounded their susceptibilities and hurt their pride. They assert that you have addressed them in improper language. In fact—um—I believe the exact words are—'damned scoundrels,' and 'cads.'

"I have to enquire, sir, whether you have designated gentlemen of your Indian staff, and Brahmans at that, as 'damned scoundrels,' and 'cads.' "

Hapgood summarized the facts.

The Surgeon General heard him through.

"Is that all?" he asked, at the close.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. You will find, as you proceed, that in principle there is nothing uncommon in that experience—nothing whatever to justify your case. You were, however, practically in the delirium of a heavy fever when you used those words. That constitutes your excuse. But don't lapse again, or

you will have to go. And I will remind you, further, of two things of extreme importance to your career,—things which I carefully pointed out to you at the start.

"They are: (a) In all official dealings here keep your personal feelings out of it. And (b) never, with any Indian, lose your temper. Both habits destroy usefulness.

"And—um—by the way, Hapgood, if I may ask, is it possible that you are running just a bit short on—um—shall we say *spiritual understanding?* And that broad religious toleration pledged by the Government we serve?"[1]

Hapgood wondered, a little uncomfortably, if the shadow of a grin lurked under the grizzled shelter of his chief's moustache.

[1] "Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure."—Proclamation of Queen Victoria, November 1, 1858, on the Crown's assumption of the Government of India.

The Adi-Dravidas [Outcastes, or Untouchables] are still denied the use of public wells and tanks and at the same time stigmatised as unclean. They are still kept out of schools and colleges maintained from public funds and at the same time despised as ignorant and illiterate. They are still shut out from temples and yet branded as ungodly and unfit to associate with. For access to public roads and even for space to bury the dead, they have to depend very much on the capricious benevolence of their Caste Hindu neighbours.—RAO BAHADUR M. C. RAJAH. *The Oppressed Hindus*. Madras, 1925. P. 50.

The Adi-Dravida [Untouchable] field labourer in many districts, is so tied up by debt to his master, who is a Caste Hindu and who takes care that the debt shall not be redeemed, that he is practically in the position of a serf and the system of man-mortgage by which the labourer binds himself and frequently his heirs to service till the debt is redeemed is well known.—*Ibid*. P. 9.

This Maha Sabha emphatically protests against the so-called Adi-Hindu [Untouchable or Depressed Class] movement started by some self-seeking persons with a view to create division between the Hindu Community and warns the so-called untouchable brethren against the dangers of falling a victim to this harmful propaganda and calls upon them to remain faithful to and well wishers of their ancestral Hindu faith.—*Resolution* Passed by the Hindu Maha Sabha, or Hindu General Convention, April, 1928. *Indian Witness*, Lucknow, October 24, 1928.

We do not believe in the Hindu religion, nor do we hold it in high esteem.

We do not desire to keep any close social or political contact with the caste Hindus, who think they are polluted by our mere touch, or even by the casting of our shadows on them, though they endeavour to count us with them so that they may enjoy greater rights at the expense of ours . . . In the name of humanity and the British sense of justice we beseech you to take such steps as you deem necessary, so that our vast community may no longer be denied the natural rights of the citizen of British Empire and be not left at the mercy

of the Hindu tyrants.—*Petition of the Untouchable Association of Jullundur to the Simon Commission.* 1928.

. . . It should be remembered that the Submerged Tenth of other countries owe their condition chiefly to economic causes, but in this Presidency [Madras] the Submerged Sixth . . . owe their miserable condition to social and religious rules, operating against them through the centuries. The peculiarity in the case of India does not consist in the existence of such a submerged class, but rather in the means employed to keep that class permanently under the blockade set up by the usurpers of power and influence.—RAO BAHADUR M. C. RAJAH. *The Oppressed Hindus,* Huxley Press, Madras, 1925. P. 5.

WITNESS: "There is really no link between the Hindus and the Depressed Classes. . . . We cannot be considered a part of the Hindu community."

SIR JOHN SIMON: "There are some very distinguished Hindu public men who have exhibited a good deal of interest in the cause of the depressed classes. There is no question about that?"

WITNESS: "There is a great deal of platform talk but no action."—Testimony of Dr. Ambed-

kar, representing the Depressed Classes Association of Bombay, before the Simon Commission, Poona Hearing. Reported November 1, 1928, in the Calcutta [Weekly] *Statesman.*

Ever and anon we are told that the Indian National Congress is representative of all the people of India. This is the blackest lie ever told; . . . For how can the Congress claim to represent the whole of India when we . . . 60 millions of the Indian population, are outside it? . . . Wedded secretly to a base policy of keeping us down so that they may not be deprived of hewers of wood and drawers of water once they become masters of this country, they have little or nothing to say who we are and what part we have to play in the budding of the nation. . . . We are keenly alive to all their tactics to influence in their favour the labour in England. If the principles of the Labour Party in England be as genuine as they say, surely their sympathies ought to be with us the suffering humanity in this country, their fellow labourers.—R. RAJAGOPAL, *Audi-Dravida Guardian*, Coimbatore, "Devoted to the Interests of the Submerged Communities," April 30, 1928. Pp. 1 and 4.

IN THE BRAHMAN'S HOUSE

We all concede, we all agree with a certain amount of conceit and pleasure that India is spiritual. Believe me, as long as we treat our Indian women as we do India is not spiritual.—KRISHNAMURTI. *Stri-Dharma*, January, 1926. P. 37.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

Just a page, as commonplace as sleep, out of the long, long book of life in Hindu India.

It all took place in one room—the women's common room in a rich Brahman's house in the Madras Presidency. An upstairs room, on three sides blind, while on the fourth it opens darkly on a darkling inner gallery. A bare room, whose furniture begins and ends with a table, two chairs, and a few floor-mats. A dingy, sunless, cheerless room, with dirty, finger-marked walls. A room with an abiding morbid smell of mould and drugs and curry, of ailing human bodies and of clogged or missing drains. A room, in fact, identical with many other women's rooms in many other Brahman houses encircling the ancient Temple that makes world-famous this ancient town.

All day long, coming and going, the women foregathered in the room for talk and rest—the Brahman's old mother, his three sons' wives, his two widowed sisters, the wives of several young cousins or nephews, and, with them, Alamelu, his

little daughter. Amongst them, without order or governance, their many small children crawled or toddled, played, wept, or slept; and, even to the three-year-olds, each alternately either stuffed curry and rice or fought off the new baby for the mother's breast.

All day long, what was there for the women to do—save when the husbands' summons came? To worship, with due ceremony, the family's idols, placating watchful gods; to oversee the preparation of meals; then, each, with downcast eyes to serve her lord his food; to sleep, to nibble sweets, to chew betel and spit the red juice, splash! against the walls; to talk about jewelry, clothes, child-bearing, sickness, pain, the ways of husbands, how to snare favour, how to launch curses and weave spells; how to bring rivals to naught. And, always, to bicker and quarrel, to concoct scandals and to sing the chronicles of the Heavenly Host.

Not one of them could read or write a single word. The old mother, head of the women, held such learning to be of the devil; so that if a new child-wife, introduced into the household, brought with her some smattering from the school, it soon slipped quite away, lost forever in the shadows of the Room.

Not one of them possessed any knowledge of the outer world, its ways, its people or its use of life.

Some of the young women coughed badly; one had coughed until the blood gushed, and then had died.

"It is because they get no sun and air, and never any exercise," said an English doctor-lady whom the Brahman once brought in to see if perchance she could help.

"Sun, air and exercise are for low-castes, not for women of our station," spoke the old mother, stiffly.

And never again could any doctor-lady gain entrance to the Room.

But those who had coughed a little coughed worse, and tossed with fever at night; so that often and often during the long dark hours, one or another, wakening a baby, would take it into her arms and cuddle it as a toy, the better to beguile the tedium of pain.

After that, more died, and new wives—children all—came in their place.

But nothing ever changed the Rule of the Room.

Yet to call the place unhappy were to err. The

men of the household were kind to their wives, according to their light, and rarely beat them. The women, such as had husbands, venerated their husbands—even loved them, adored their children, counted themselves greatly blessed not to be sterile—not to be turned away; and saw in the death of those that died no sorrow, but rather a glorious safety from the dread stroke of widowhood. The widows, on their part, rejoiced in the goodness of the Brahman, their brother who gave them shelter; in the protection of their mother who largely shielded them from persecution by the wives; and in their consequent peace and safety in which to do penance for the elevation of their dead husbands' souls. The old mother-dowager, undisputed Autocrat of the Household and Guardian of the Faith, was happy in her son's devotion and proud of the little grandsons multiplying at her knees. Finally the children, having their every demand satisfied, suffered only from spoiling, from colic, from assorted infections, and from fits of rage. Not one member of the entire household suspected the existence of any more desirable type of earthly life, and none, therefore, desired change.

Save only Alamelu, the good Brahman's small daughter, just over ten years old.

Alamelu's whole being was a pit of secret despair.

Ever since she could lisp, Alamelu had prayed for a husband—prayed to receive a husband noble as Rama the god, and to be to him a wife like Sita, Rama's faithful mate. The grandmother herself had taught her those prayers in true Brahmanic form, and had daily and vigorously seen to their practice.

Furthermore, each day of her life Alamelu had heard every function of sex discussed, without reserve or limit, until her mind was steeped in conviction that sex-use alone is the reason and end of female being. Not to marry, she knew, were perdition thrice confounded. And yet, as her own time approached, black agonies possessed her.

It began over a year ago when Rajammal, her beloved elder sister, then lately sent to her husband, made her first visit as a wife to her father's house. Rajammal's match had been brilliant, as to both caste and fortune, and she, beautiful child, had gone to its consummation rejoicing. But the Rajammal who returned after six months' wife-

hood came as a broken thing. The tale she told was a tale of degradation as well as of pain. And little Alamelu, clinging passionately to her sister's cold fingers while the listening women lamented, felt the knife in her own heart. "The men of his house were ever wife-slayers—had never mercy!" the women wailed.

After Rajammal's departure, the short home-visit done, Alamelu brooded always on her dear one's woes. Over and over, phrase by phrase, her faultless memory rehearsed the shame she had heard, while the terrors of her sister's mind transfused her own. Hideous shapes and scenes took permanence in her brain, awaiting only their moment to stand forth and strike her stiff with fear. By day she dwelt apart in that grim picture-world. By night her sister's voice, shrieking for pity, destroyed her rest.

"Alamelu is pretty enough, but she does not grow. Rather, she declines," observed the household after a time. "Past nine and she looks scarce seven. She jumps and trembles at every little sound. She has not the courage of a mouse. Will a husband be pleased with that?"

Then, "He may"—it decided, comfortably—"some are. Who knows!"

Whereat Alamelu, shivering afresh, crept close to her own mother's side and hid in the folds of her veil.

But of that which obsessed her she spoke never a word. Not to any one on earth.

Nor did the mother, who tenderly loved her and who felt her distress, know what to do. Was she, too, not part and product of the Room—and a mere voiceless, creditless thing, being mother only of girls?

So passed a year, day twin to day for Alamelu. And then, into the shadows, shone a ray of almost unbearable light. Rajammal—Rajammal the beloved—Rajammal, of whom no word had been heard in all these weary months, was coming again on a visit—coming in a grand, big automobile, new-bought to the glory of her rich husband—an automobile with dark glass purdah windows, made to keep the eye of man from marring that husband's honour by resting on her face. Darling Rajammal, though only for a day, was coming home! Alamelu could touch her—could take her hand—could feast her eyes upon her—could listen and see for herself whether the gods had heard her prayers, had relented, had restored health and happiness and given peace!

The day dawned. The great rose-pink Rolls-Royce rushed hooting into the street—with one last roar of horns and grinding of brakes pulled up at the door. A heavy-swathed something, lifted out, was carried up the stairs—tottered into the Room—and, with a wail, sank into the women's outstretched arms.

Scarce need of words—and yet, when the lamentations of greetings had subsided, words came—words in gasps, between pauses filled with outcry from the sympathetic wives. Words, and wails; silences, and tears.

"Behold, the men of his house were ever wife-torturers! It is in their blood," echoed the women as before—"Merciless they are, merciless they will be. Alas for all women! Alas! Alas!"

And Alamelu crouching at her sister's side, her burning cheek against that ice-cold hand, listened speechless, through it all, while each base detail scorched its image upon her brain.

But no one, in the general emotion, noticed Alamelu. Why should they? Where else should she be? And yet it was then and there, in the midst of them all, that she formed, in the solitude of her own mind, the great resolve of her life. She, even she, whatever the sacrilege implied or the punish-

ment involved, would intercede for her beloved.

Desperately she strove with fear. Again, again and again the ground slipped away from beneath her. She *could* not! She *must!*

At last the knell of parting struck. With gentle hands the women raised their half-fainting guest to clothe her for the journey—and on the spur of that dread sight little Alamelu, tottering to her feet, stumbled across the room to prostrate herself before the Arbiter.

"O most reverend Mother of my Father"—the childish treble wavered high—"thou hast heard the measure of my sister's woes, which pass the power of flesh to bear. Tell us, is there no mercy anywhere? *Must she return to her husband's house?*"

Amazed, the old woman gazed down upon the child—so little and so passing timorous, so greatly to have dared! Amazed, and silent, almost as if pitying.

Then, while all the women hung upon the words, she spoke, kindly enough, yet with the sternness of death:—

"Child of my child, and heir of the common lot, come hither. Give me thy hands between my hands. Put all heresy and rebellion from thy

heart. Now listen while I recite our law that ordereth all women, which to break were to incur the torments of eternities untold.

"*There is no other god on earth for a woman than her husband. The most excellent of all the good works she can do is to seek to please him by manifesting perfect obedience to him. . . . Let his defects be what they may, let his wickedness be what it may, a wife should always look upon him as her god. . . . If her husband abuses her grossly she shall lay hold of his hands, kiss them, and beg his pardon. . . . Let all her words and actions give public proof that she looks upon her husband as her god.*

"Child, thou hast heard, once for all. Know now that the house of my son, thy father, is a house of honour,—of obedience to the most High Gods. Brahman women we be, and, living or dying, *we keep the code.* Thy sister, therefore, since her lord requireth it, returns to his house tonight. So be it. Go."

Afterward, when the flurry of departure was over and the Room had quieted down, Alamelu's mother came to the child, raised her in her arms and brought her slowly back to consciousness.

"Never mind, my pet, never mind!" she coaxed.

"Thy sister but works out her *Karma*—her fate. There is no other path. It were no true love to interfere—but only an offence to the holy gods."

And then, as the child's heavy sobs wrenched her frail body the more, came the thought to divert her:

"Listen, my jewel," cooed the mother, "listen and be cheered. Great days draw nigh for thee. Thou goest to thy husband this very next month—and a fine big man he is, stouter than thy father, and rich withal, and will load thee down with splendid gems and beautiful raiment, and thou shalt bear brave sons and—"

"But *who—who* is he?" As if in fore-knowledge of doom, the child started erect to ask the question, her every muscle tense and quivering, her eyes like the eyes of a wounded deer.

"'*Who* is he? *Who?*' Why—why—" the mother stammered, hesitated, stared blankly back, as if she herself now first confronted the fact. Then—

"Oh! my little one! Oh, my dove! Oh, my tiny, tiny flower! It is true! *Thou art his fourth mating and he the elder brother of thy sister's lord!*"

With one helpless moan, she clasped her child in her arms.

What child has been happy in India? I ask you to look backward to your own childhood; I do not think my childhood was happy; I am not saying anything against my father or my mother. It is the result of the old traditions that are carried on. The child has a worse time in India than anywhere else in the world. The child is the most unfortunate being in India; it has no room of its own, no amusements; it goes to bed when it likes; there is no idea of caring for the child. You know all these things as well as I. There may be plenty of loose affection as indeed there is, but there is no precision in your affection for the welfare of the child. . . . And the child grows up in sloppiness, in dirt and in squalor. . . . I always thought I would be born again in India, but now I should hesitate if the opportunity came to me, because you have no idea of the happiness of the child both in Europe and in America. Childhood is the time really to be happy because that is the time on which you always look back. That is the impressionable

age. How can a child be happy in India with all these monstrous things around him?—KRISHNAMURTI. Address at Adyar, Madras. *Stri-Dharma*, January, 1926.

A grandmother who has herself suffered because of her widowhood and who has seen the suffering of her daughter also widowed when young, can, in spite of all this, be found trying to marry her grandchild off at eight years old.—*Stri-Dharma*, Editorial, November, 1925.

At the All-India Educational Conference this year at Delhi there were gathered women from all parts of India and of all shades of creed and nationalities who unanimously cried out against this pernicious custom of child-marriage. . . . Three or four of these women got up on the platform and in their own national languages, with earnest and sincere faces, they said in a most sarcastic way: "Marriage? Marriage? Who talks of marriage? Is there any such thing as marriage in India? Have we women any existence in India? We are sold to the best available man our fathers can get for us, be he old or young, blind or lame, rich or poor."—MRS. P. K. ROY. Calcutta [Weekly] *Statesman*, July 26, 1928.

Is it not a matter for irony, that the Brahmans, the highest of all castes on whom *indriya-nigraha* [the control of the passions] is most incumbent, should practice it the least, if we are to judge by the almost universal prevalence amongst them of early marriage and immature child-bearing.—MRS. PARVATI CHANDRASEKHARA AIYAR. "Woman's Advancement," *Stri-Dharma*, August, 1927. P. 149.

Every social evil in this blessed country goes in the name of religion.—DR. [MRS.] S. M. REDDI, *Proceedings Madras Legislative Council*, March 27, 1928. P. 43.

THE HEDGE OF THORNS

"Thou shalt not burn thy widows;
Thou shalt not kill thy daughters;
Thou shalt not bury alive thy lepers."

Trilogue of Government, delivered by John Lawrence to the Punjab.—R. B. SMITH. *Life of Lord Lawrence.* London, 1883. Vol. I. P. 196.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

THE HEDGE OF THORNS

The old Zemindar[1] was rich. The gods, rewarders of all merit, had made him so. And if his merit must, somewhat too obviously, have been acquired in a previous life, what matter? For the memory of the gods is everlasting.

In his youth, to speak plainly, the old Zemindar had been a rapscallion. But out of that very shell, as if to show the omnipotence of the Omnipotent, had hatched the bird of wealth that in his elder years was to perch upon his shoulders. This happened when the impious British did violence to great and holy rivers, flinging their waters, hither and yon, awry across the Punjab wastes, making rich and green that which the wisdom of the gods designed to starve.

"Come in!" then they called, to the wondering peoples. "Come in, you who are of good repute and bred to till the soil. Come profit by this newly fertile land."

[1] Indian holder of land for which he pays revenue direct to Government.

But at first few responded. For who, however hardy, however poor, desires to quit his native village for any strange new place? Or who must not fear lest the gods take vengeance upon the flouters of their will?

Then the Sahibs took council together. Solid men they wanted, industrious and sound, fairly to prove the value of their gift. But, if such refused the venture the way must be broken somehow, by such pioneers as could be impressed. So, once and again, the Sahibs examined records. Whence came, here to a man, there to a man, messages such as this:

"Better, perchance, to begin life afresh, in a new village, where no scores yet are written, than to remain at home, where the shadow of the score grows long."

Such a message, indeed, it was that, reaching the young Rapscallion, impelled him toward the new country, there presently to receive, with some plain advice, fifty fine acres of land.

And the land, satisfied with water, bred with good seeds, opened with roads, possessed in peace, brought forth in time abundant prosperity, till the fifty acres became two hundred and fifty acres, whose great crops sang to the sun.

But the young Rapscallion, turned old Zemin-

dar, while acquiring years and riches acquired therewith a stiff and prideful heart.

His son, he ordained, should not live by the land, whatever its rewards. His son should shed lustre on his father's fame by taking a learned degree,—by becoming a professional man with a pair of handsome initials tacked to the end of his name.

So the old Zemindar sent his heir to the schools, to qualify for the bar.

Meantime, with great pomp and ceremony and splendours of feasting and gifts, even as became so rich a man, he had married the boy off.

Now this boy, Dhanpat Rai by name, was a good boy, filial and obedient, quick and subtle. In due season, therefore, diploma in hand, back he came to his father's house.

"Good!" said the old Zemindar. "Now shalt thou hear thy future: The horoscope is auspicious. The die is cast. Thou goest hence to abide in another village, distant, but chosen shrewdly in that it lies close by a town where Courts of Law are held. There shalt thou sit, ready at hand to fan the wrath of men who disagree, growing in fame as an advocate till thy light shines bright upon thy father's head.

"But before thou goest, hear my warning. In

time to come see that no needless weddings tie around thy neck the millstone of debt. Rich as I am, I must go heavy-burdened yet these many years, to pay off the costs I incurred in wedding thee. But my father wed me with a gorgeous show, and my honour demanded that I do more, not less, for thee; even as thou, if it be possible, must exceed me.

"Now, thy wife is with child. When that child comes to birth if—which the gods forbid—it be a girl, *see thou that discretion is used, and promptly.* Properly to marry a daughter of thine were cruelly to bind thee to the usurer.

"See thou well, therefore, that the *dhai* [midwife] understands her duty."

So Dhanpat Rai, followed by Roseleaf his young wife, went away to the village of his father's choice.

There in due season, his first child was born. And the child—for surely the gods that day were gone a-hunting and heard not prayers—the child was a girl.

But the midwife observed due discretion.

Months passed. Dhanpat Rai wrought wisely amongst his neighbours, sowing strife ever more

cunningly, garnering the fruits thereof, even as his father's wisdom had bid, and planting the tree of fortune and of fame.

As for Roseleaf, shut away in the shadows of the inner rooms, daily and nightly she spent her soul in penance and supplication. For once more motherhood drew nigh; again to bring forth a girl-child were to prove yet-unexpiated her sin committed in some by-gone life; and such sin, through the black punishment of continued daughter-bearing, leads straight to the supplanting or the dismissal of the guilty wife.

So, in terror, little Roseleaf felt her hour approach—felt it at hand. So, in terror, she crept from her chamber into the appointed out-house. And there, shut away in stifled darkness, she lay upon a heap of foul old rags, attended only by an aged outcaste woman, most ignorant of the oppressed, lowest of the despised, dirtiest of the unclean, such as alone the Hindu code allots to the aid of women in their time of mortal stress.

"If the child be a girl—*behave with sense*," Dhanpat Rai had duly commanded the midwife, when first she reported for duty. And, small though her wit, the woman understood; for the matter belonged to her common trade.

Now it chanced that the Deputy Commissioner, ranging afield on tour of inspection, was due in the village that very day. None knew at what hour he might come. And Dhanpat Rai as an aspirant for honours, naturally enough desired to figure early and high amongst those who met the official eye. Therefore in the early morning he left his house to join the elders in the council place.

But when the young Englishman appeared, men observed with concern that a shadow sat upon his brow.

"Whence this portent? Who hath borne tales? Who hath whispered in his ear, revealing evil against me?" each man inquired within himself, and looked askance at his neighbour, full of uneasy suspicions.

But while the District Commissioner yet remained apart, making ready to hold audience, up spoke a gruff old Punjabi soldier waiting among the waiting people. And because this old soldier was of the village and a man of property and station withal, and one who, campaigning many years, had learned the ways of the English, the people listened willingly.

"Brothers," quoth he. "Little know ye of the minds of Sahibs. They think not as we. Now,

hearken all, while I, who come from private speech with the servants of the Sahib, set your minds at rest, expounding truly the cause of that blackness of the brow observed today.

"First of all, our District is a great district, equal in bigness to the land of a rich prince. And the number of the people of our district exceeds five lahks [a half million]. More than one hundred days, already, hath the Sahib been journeying without stay, examining the villages, hearing the dwellers therein, awarding justice, relief and judgment, dealing out reason to heads too thick to admit reason, bringing peace between enemies, seeing to roads and wells and boundaries, cattle and crops and seed-grain; dealing with pestilences, the causes thereof and the deliverance therefrom; also to jails and schools and hospitals, if perchance thieves in office may be stalled from stealing all they touch. In all this and much else hath the Sahib laboured, from dawn to dark, even through the heat of the days. While you of the country lie upon your beds, he scoureth from village to village without rest. And such work trieth body and soul.

"Yet it is not the work, nor the weariness thereof that blackens today the brow. For such

work is Sahibs' work and the heart of Sahibs is formed to bear it. The true cause of the blackening of the brow I shall now show you, that your minds be no more dismayed with fears.

"Know, then, that as the Sahib journeyed hither, coming of late to a large village, he sat him down to examine the state thereof. And first he called for the books of that village. Which, being brought and laid before him, he studied, page by page, yet as one who knoweth beforehand that which he shall find. Then came a page at which he tarried, going back across the writings again and yet again, while, as men perceived, his eyes grew narrow and his mouth set stiff.

"So turned he to the elders and chief men of the village, standing by, and said:

" 'Look you. Here, in this book of yours it stands written that, since last I visited the place, fifty-two children have been born. Of which children forty-one are boys and eleven, only, are girls. What say ye, men? Can such things be?' "

"For the space of five breaths all stared, perplexed, till one, the astrologer, found tongue and answered:

" 'O Presence of Bounty, what should we say?

With the gods, in their mercy, all things are possible—praised be the holy gods!'

"But again the Sahib spoke to the elders, saying: 'Come now. The books may wait. I will go see this village of yours.'

"So, Sahib and elders, together they walked up and down the streets while all the people came trooping after. And the Sahib's eyes were like sun and wind, for, seeking out all things, they were staid by naught save the *zenana* walls. But few were the words of his lips.

"Until at last he halted, and threw up his head like a stag on the hill, and sniffed the air. And so sniffing, he spoke and said:

" 'Of all the smells in this village of yours, I now smell the worst. The cause of the rest I have seen, and have walked perforce like a dancer, not to set foot therein. But the cause of this I do not see.'

"Again he tested the air, right and left, with shifting nose. Then, straight and swiftly, off he strode toward a long hedge of thorns that runneth across that part and maketh a boundary against the open fields beyond.

"And he said: 'What think ye, men? Is the

breath of this hedge a blessing to your village? Or will ye that the hedge be cut down?'

" 'Verily and beyond a doubt it stinketh,' said the headman. 'Tomorrow it shall be cut down.'

" 'Nay,' the Sahib made answer. 'What were good tomorrow were better *now.*'

"So before the eyes of the Sahib, who stood fast to watch the doing, they cut that thorn-hedge down. And in such degree as the thick bush fell, under the strokes of the blade, so did the cause of the stink become manifest.

"And the cause, in the eyes of this Sahib, was a hissing and a howling and a falling of the face.

" 'Bones of the new-born are soft,' he said. 'Flesh of the new-born is slight. When life is departed not long do either endure. Jackals, dogs, insects, worms, all hasten their going. *How many more girl-babies, then, have ye thrust into this cover, of whom no sign now remains to call for justice against ye?*'

"And again he cried bitterly upon them, saying:

" 'O hard and froward generation, who shall persuade your hearts from cruelty? For verily the beasts of the jungle are more merciful than you. Even the tigers protect their young. Does not this poor heap of decay lying here before me call to

high heaven for pity? But ye, that have wrought the thing—ye know neither pity nor shame.'

"So the Englishman remained in this same village yet several days, doing that which he found to do, as in all visitations; dealing, moreover, with the matter of the Hedge of Thorns.

"And as he wrought, men saw that the wrath that burned within him died not down; neither was it assuaged with the apportionment of blame; but hath continued to devour his inner peace even unto this very hour.

"And—so think those who are his household—this is because he himself hath now a baby daughter. And his love for that new babe maketh him more than ever tender toward children of all men, and especially toward such as be girls.

"Therefore, my brothers, set your minds at rest. This, only, is the cause of the darkened brow of the Deputy Commissioner Sahib. Not that we, here, have in aught offended, nor that any hath borne tales against us, but that they of that other village, through ill fortune, touched his weakness and aroused his wrath."

So ended the soldier's discourse—and Dhanpat Rai, early caught in its toils, remained to the end, transfixed as a serpent-charmed bird.

But no sooner was the tale finished than, sped by sheer terror, he ran to his own house and straight through the house, away to that rear hovel where lay little Roseleaf his wife.

Panting at the entrance, he shrieked for the midwife. And when the old creature peered out at him through her shaggy locks, blinking from darkness into the light of day, he screamed again, like a fool in his fear. "Is the child come?"

"Aye, come."

"Where is it?"

"Alas, it was but a girl."

"What didst thou with it?"

"What should I do, but the thing commanded?"

"Hag! Devil! Tell me what didst thou with it, lest I go raving mad!"

"Nay, then, let the master be comforted, for all was well understood. All was done as desired. I bound the thing in a cloth and thrust it into the hedge of thorns. Here, master, just here, see! *This* hedge, close by the door. Down, well down I thrust it, down amongst the thick branches."

"A hedge of thorns"—and by his own door!

"Damnation of a thousand fiends torment thee forever!" cried poor Dhanpat Rai, now gibbering with dismay. "Come then, quickly! Find it! Pluck

it out again!—Hurry! Hurry!—if perchance by the mercy of the gods some ray of life be left—"

And in his eagerness, scarce could he refrain from actually pushing the old woman on her way, though her touch were pollution of his soul.

Mumbling, trembling, yelping with the prick and tear of the thorns, at last she laid hand on the thing she sought, dragged it forth, unwound the rag—and found that life remained.

Dhanpat Rai drew one long free breath. "Take it back inside," said he. "Keep it alive"—and he bribed her conclusively with two annas, which is the equivalent of four American cents.

Then, weak from emotion, but buoyant of heart as one saved from destruction by the breadth of a single hair he hastened back to the place of audience.

And there, according to the programme already arranged for the occasion, he presently poured forth to the Deputy Commissioner his speech of praise and welcome, swimming in seas of English only too fine to be good.

After the Deputy Commissioner was gone—gone not merely from the village but also from the neighbouring town of the Law Courts—after

that anxious period was past—came a day when the ambitious young barrister, returning at eventide to his own home, found Roseleaf his wife, emerged from the out-house, lying on her bed, the babe at her breast.

For her time of uncleanness was over and done. She had performed her purification ceremonies, and now therefore was once more fit for the eye and the touch of her lord.

But, at the sudden sight of her, his wrongs surged up within him like the boiling of a thrice-fired pot. Without a word he turned his stricken face away and went and sat apart. And when the girl, painfully sliding from the bed, crawled to him to kiss his feet and place their dust upon her head—to praise him, prostrate, for his generous mercy in permitting her child to live, he could bear no more, but sprayed forth tears of rage and self-pity as he kicked her with his driven heel.

"O bringer of shame!" he sobbed. "What use is it that I prosper in the Courts of Law! What use that the English hear my eloquence and admire my learning! Because of thy sins, thou ill-omened slave, the brotherhood mocks me as a zero—a fool—a begetter of daughters—and my father

will disinherit me. *Aie! Aie!* Unhappy man that I am!"

For indeed he stood at his wit's end. To let the child live were to incur his father's vengeful wrath. To "let" the child die were to play into the hands of some jealous lawyer-rival, watchful, rat-like, to destroy his future with the powerful Deputy Commissioner whose favour he needed and whose strange foible he now only too well knew.

What should he do? What on earth could he do? Often and often was the scene re-enacted—curses, tears and blows on the man's part, reverent and loving submission on the part of the girl-wife.

Meanwhile much time passed, Dhanpat Rai ever avoiding the bar of his own mind—ever leaving to the morrow the decision of his own quandary, while his growing skill at discord-breeding amongst his neighbours filled his hours with cases-at-law and his purse with pickings.

Even the message that he sent to his father announcing the birth of the babe lied not plainly; neither did it say that the babe was a girl. The old man might die, perchance, ere need came to tell—or Roseleaf or another wife might bear a son.

As for Roseleaf, now ailing always, she clung to her child; and the child unfolded such pretty ways of love that even the injured father when his eye chanced to rest upon her, sometimes felt strange inward stirrings; whereat he would scowl sharply and avert his gaze.

Thus two years wore on. Then dawned a day that brought a terrible message from the old Zemindar.

"Let my son come to me, bringing his child," ran the word, "for I grow old, and would look upon my grandson before I die. Let him leave all, and come at once."

Not daring to disobey, Dhanpat Rai made ready. And Roseleaf, weeping covertly, dressed the little one in her best, and painted her face and put jewels upon her till she looked like a lovely doll. And so, at length, as a lovely doll, did Dhanpat Rai, quaking with fear, bear her into the Zemindar's presence.

"Perchance she may melt his wrath," he thought, uneasily, "whilst I tell him the foible of the Deputy Commissioner."

But the wrath of the Zemindar knew no assuagement, for, added to disobedience, was tacit deception. His pride shrieked for tribute.

"Chatter not to me of Commissioner Sahibs!" he raged. "Sahibs come and go, and talk I hear of their going soon forever. But whoever comes or goes, the *land* remains. *Debt* remains. By all the gods, thou *shalt* give me a grandson, and by all the gods the wedding of this insect shall not suck his inheritance away. O thou undutiful! O thou stiff of neck! None other than thyself hath brought this folly to pass. Therefore thy hand alone shall undo it, and that right speedily, lest I blast thee with curses.

"See, then, I give thee a knife. I give thee a pick. Take thou the tools. Take thou thy wretched spawn—and get thee hence into my wheat field, nor dare return without accomplishment."

Like a whipped dog Dhanpat Rai slunk from the old man's sight, carrying the tools, and turned him toward the wide green wheat.

And the way was long and the child at his heels, though she trotted her best, made slow progress.

So he picked her up and sat her on his shoulder.

But, having her so close, the sweet scents that her mother had put within her garments, and the pressure of her soft little body against his neck, and the clinging of her tiny hands, all troubled

him, so that he strode the faster, to be done with it.

Thus they came to the tall grain, and through it to a part by the water-trench where ground is clear. And there in a secret place, Dhanpat Rai lifted the child from off his shoulder and put her down within the cover of the long-stalked wheat.

Now, some men might first have used the knife, and later dug the hole. But to Dhanpat Rai it was ever more natural to defer that which is hard.

So, turning his back on the little one, he tucked up his garments to save them from soil, laid hold on the pick and began to dig.

Yet, though he wielded the pick, he thought of the knife, and the thought like a sickness clogged his throat.

How caressing the touch of those small hands —how soft her little body—how sweet its scent!— The knife!—To drive home the *knife*—

Oh, haste! Haste to be done! Was ever poor blameless man so persecuted!

And so, presently, what with hurry and tumult of mind and lack of skill with his tool, he struck amiss, and splashed his bare legs with mud. Cursing thereat, he had stopped to kilt his garments

higher when, from behind, a sudden rustling of crisp leaf-blades turned his blood to ice. Transfixed with fear of some lurking spy, he waited motionless. Then came the tender cooing of a little voice—and he turned—to see his baby toddling toward him, all love and eagerness, her face alight with sympathy, her tiny hands out-stretched to wipe the mud-lumps from his flesh.

A moment Dhanpat Rai stood quite still, looking down upon her, as, woman-fashion, she worked. Then something, somewhere within him, broke. Something within him spread wings, headily.

Snatching his child in his arms, he stared into her eyes, close, close, as though for the first time he saw her.

"A pest upon the land!" he cried. "Rather would I have thee, my daughter, than all the land there is. The harvests of the Law Courts shall wed thee like a queen. A pest, a pest upon the harvests of the land!"

For Dhanpat Rai, for the moment, knew his mind.

And so, once more, he burst into weeping.

The result of this bad practice [infanticide] in the Punjab has been that the female population is very much lower than the male population, and the immoral results of this are also manifest in the illicit connections between man and woman, all due to a reduction in the female population. I think I would not be wrong in saying that at the present day in the criminal courts of the Punjab the majority of the cases relate to abduction of women.—THE HON. SARDAR SHIVDEV SINGH OBEROI. *Council of State Debates*, Simla, September 12, 1927.

[In communities having the tradition of female infanticide] it seems to be quite useless and quite unnecessary to insist upon reasons for the low sex-ratio other than . . . the continued deliberate destruction of female infant life either by active or by passive means.—*Census of India*, 1921. Vol. I. Appendix VI.

In some districts practices which are highly repugnant to Europeans, like infanticide and

'suttee,' are viewed in a totally different light by sections of the people. . . . Infanticide, a common practice amongst all primitive people, is undoubtedly still prevalent amongst the Rajputs, Jats, and Gujars, though the method may not amount to the actual murder of the girl babies, but only to the feeling that the parent 'need not strive officiously to keep alive.'—G. T. GARRATT, I.C.S., Retd. *An Indian Commentary*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1928. Pp. 232-3.

Orthodox [Hindu] opinion has been against all reforms. It has been from time immemorial in favour of human sacrifices. It has been in favour of Suttee. It has been in favour of infanticide. It has been in favour of baby marriages. I ask you, are you going to truckle to this opinion without examining whether it is reasonable or in consonance with the requirements of modern society? —SIR HARI SINGH GOUR. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 8, 1928. P. 388.

Whatever rights, whatever privileges there are for the women in India today, in the eye of the law, these have been the result of the wonderful sense of chivalry which the English Judges and Jurists had when they drew up the codes anew.

The position of the Indian woman would have been far worse than what it is today but for the extraordinary courtesy and the uniform and somewhat picturesque dignity shown unto them by these noble Judges. In the one hundred and twenty-five years that have passed away, it must be said, that it is after all, the Englishman mainly who has espoused the cause of the woman in India. —R. L. Rau. "The Legal Disabilities of Hindu Women," *Stri-Dharma*, August, 1927. P. 148.

THE OLD GREY COW

Hinduism believes in the oneness not of merely all human life but in the oneness of all that lives. Its worship of the cow is, in my opinion, its unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism.
—GANDHI. *Young India*, October 20, 1927.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

THE OLD GREY COW

An old grey cow—mouse-grey—pale. Eyes narrow and long, their lids, at the outer corners, subtly upcurving in secret and brooding beauty. Eyes like the eyes of a princess of Egypt carved in stone.

Around her neck a string of sky-blue beads. And her life reckoned holy. So holy that he who should take it must suffer the pains of hell, to be escaped only through forfeits and heavy penances.

But her bones almost cut through her skin, the edge of each one slashed sharp against gaunt shadows sunk in the hollows beneath. In her prime, she had scarcely given two quarts of milk a day; for she was an ordinary cow of India. And now it was years since she had ceased production.

But the prosperous farmer, her owner, still doled out to her an occasional handful of husk-diluted seeds or a little dry straw, dealing with her piously as with all his cattle. Also, daily, she and

they wandered forth with the herd of the village, out into the jungle to graze.

"Jungle," they called it, yet meant no forest, no luxuriant greenness, but rather, waste stretches, where, in the long dry season, the bare earth cracked and gasped with thirst—a dead, grim desert of clay heaved into small, sharp, ragged hillocks like sea-dunes half devoured by surf.

Here and there over the waste, far apart, faint dark stains appeared—bits of herbage perhaps the breadth of a man's two hands; and here and there on the peak of a hillock clung a scrawny, twisted shrub, scantly tufted with harsh, dry, mould-green leaves. These were the plums of the grazing.

Taking all together a square mile's surface would scarcely produce a bushel of nourishing fodder—and the herd of the village numbered over a hundred head.

Once and again the old grey cow, searching with the rest, would secure a nibble of ground growth. But to climb the hillocks required more strength than she possessed.

Otherwise, like her mates, she scavenged the streets of the village, in sheer necessity devouring things beneath a vulture's notice—stuff whose

presence in the streets was one of the reasons, many yet severally sufficient, why the villagers so liberally died.

Now it wàs mid dry season. These many days the old grey cow had scarcely eaten at all. Clearer eyes had discovered each morsel before she saw it. Or swifter limbs had distanced her feeble gait. Or heavier shoulders had thrust her aside, if by rare luck she chanced on substance of any sort that famine could call food.

Therefore, this morning when her owner turned her forth, her head swung low and her knees wavered, though habit and the herd still carried her on, out into the "jungle" waste. But in the push for sustenance the old grey cow today stood no chance. And when at last the herd headed back toward home she could not keep its pace, but lagged ever farther behind—a pitiful sight enough had there been one to see who cared for dumb beasts' misery.

Farther and farther they distanced her, until, near dusk, though the village walls were already in view, she could strive no more. So still she stood, wistfully watching the cloud of dust that enveloped them, as it drifted away and away through the twilight into the mud-grey town.

Was it before, in her weakness, she fell, that the dogs found her? Did they leap and pull her down, seeing their hour was come?

Gaunt-jawed, fierce-eyed, with staring ribs and hip bones, pink with sores and wounds, deformed with unheard-of diseases, in their scores they gathered. Gasping, choking, snarling in their need, they flung themselves upon her, and tore at her where she lay.

Tore so eagerly that, when Dennis O'Sullivan approached the spot, never did they perceive him till, on his horse, he loomed above them. Then with bared teeth they drew back, half threatening, half afraid.

All but one thrice-desperate bitch, whose long flat teats told of the litter that somewhere dragged on her life; she, with the courage of motherhood leaping forth as the others faltered, sunk her fangs deep into the throat of the old grey cow.

Deep into her throat, so that, as life fled, the necklace broke and the sky-blue beads spilled abroad, rolling hither and yon in the trampled dust.

Dennis O'Sullivan, District Officer, could not sleep that night. His men had pitched his tent in a

decent place; his cot was easy enough; the work of the day had certainly earned him an honest rest, and the work of the morrow would begin with dawn. But somehow Dennis O'Sullivan could not sleep.

Instead, over and over again, he saw the old grey cow, saw the starved bitch's piteous fury; saw the eyes of the pack ablaze with hate and fear. And facts and obstinate figures and helpless compassions, each and all as futile as familiar, churned around and around in his weary brain.

One hundred and forty-seven million head of cattle in British India, half of them useless. Great cattle-owning areas where no fodder at all is planted. Little children in myriads withering for lack of milk. Cows in myriads milkless from starvation. Cows and children daily multiplying, multiplying, multiplying. Cows, unlike children, sacrosanct to the Hindu world, so that to kill one useless, suffering, moribund skeleton were a desperate crime—an incitement to holy war. Yet cows left without compunction to perish slowly, since even the holy cow, as a re-incarnate soul, but pays, in any present pain, the price of sin committed in an earlier life.

What use, then, labouring to get these people

to plant more fodder? How long could an ocean of fodder sustain such crazy demands? Why struggle about that or anything? Why . . .

"O-oh! o-oh! *o-oh!*—O-oh! yip-yip! *o-oh!* O-OH!" The cry of the jackals a-hunting—that echoing, shivering cry in which some hear the wail of babes in torment and others the shrieks of subhuman souls adrift in space. "O-oh! *o-oh!* O-OH!"—jackal packs on the run, scouring the village streets, chanting, chanting the old, old song of the Indian night.

With a sigh, O'Sullivan shifted in his bed, once again to seek escape from the treadmill of semi-consciousness.

Yet morning found his mind still heavy—his inner vision still haunted.

So that when, soon after dawn, he sat down with the rulers of the village to discuss vital statistics, he had no will to keep his oppression from his tongue. He told them of the killing of the old grey cow.

"It was her fate," they said, without sentiment. "She did but pay a debt of bygone sin."

"And the dogs—" continued O'Sullivan, "all

the stray, sick, starving dogs, that you kick and stone but never feed?"

"It is a sin to feed stray dogs," one replied for the rest.

"Yet you will neither stop their breeding nor put them out of their pain." Even as he spoke, O'Sullivan knew that his fatigue, not his intelligence, pronounced the useless words.

"It is a sin to break the stream of life," said he who before had spoken.

"Yet, truly, Sahib," another put in, "the dogs have done us much harm of late. There is madness amongst the jackals. Mad jackals have bitten the dogs, which, being themselves stricken with madness, have bitten men. And these men have died miserably. Out of this village nine have gone since the last full moon."

But O'Sullivan, at the words, felt, as it were, a sudden breeze let into a stifling room.

"How if I, myself, undertake to rid you of these multitudes of dogs that, whilst they starve, threaten you all with madness? For me," he said, "it is no sin to take their lives."

His audience exchanged glances—hesitated. Then, "The Sahib's reckoning is with his own

gods"—it was the youngest of the lot who spoke. "What the Sahib does can be no guilt of ours."

O'Sullivan swept the circle with his eyes. None ventured nearer either "yes" or "no." "I need not drive them to the length of speech," he thought, and aloud added: "Be my acts upon my own head."

Within the hour, accordingly, he had despatched an order to the local dispensary. Within two hours four outcaste men, who, having no purity to lose, might do such work, had set out at his command to spread food before the dogs. And when, in mid-afternoon, having finished all business and broken camp, he was about to ride farther on his tour, O'Sullivan sent for the outcaste four, to enquire of their performance.

"What about the dogs?" he asked.

"May it please the Sahib, the dogs are quite as before," they answered.

"What! Did you neglect, then, to put the powder into the food, according to the order? Did the dogs refuse the food?"

"Nay, Sahib, not so. We did as the Sahib commanded. And the dogs ate, each and all. But other men followed close behind us, and where we fed, there they fed too, promptly. And it appears that

the food they gave contained also a medicine. Which medicine caused each dog instantly to cast up all our food that he had eaten. Therefore it is that the dogs remain exactly as before."

Ill though he could now spare time from the road, O'Sullivan sent for the head-man of the village.

"What," he asked, "is the meaning of this utter, utter folly concerning the dogs? The responsibility was mine. You knew. You agreed. Why did you cause the work to be undone?"

"Nay, Sahib, Upholder of the World, be not displeased. For after the council, we, considering together, perceived two things. We perceived that if the dogs died as planned, the Brahmans, for all our innocence, would declare us guilty, and would force us all to pay them a heavy fine, to give them a great feast, and to go a pilgrimage at much cost and pains to bathe in Holy Ganges. We also remembered that a dog, like a man, dies only in his appointed hour. If, when the Sahib gave poisoned food, we had done nothing, the Brahmans might have cursed us to Hell unless we dearly bought their absolution. But if, when the Sahib gave poisoned food, we quickly gave powerful emetics, the dogs would none the less have died

if it lay in their Fate then to die, and we should escape the screws of the Brahmans."

As O'Sullivan rode away from the village he passed the skeleton of the old grey cow—such as remained of it. A few blue beads still lay in the dust amongst the bones.

Call it prejudice, call it passion, call it the height of religion, but this is an undoubted fact that in the Hindu mind nothing is so deep rooted as the sanctity of the cow.—RAI BAHADUR PANDIT J. L. BHARGAVA. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1921. Vol. I. Pt. I. P. 530.

Where the cow provides some milk for the household, as well as for her calf, cultivators try to spare her two to three pounds of a mixture of cotton seed and bran, or oilcake, or pulse; but, when her milk fails, the ration is withdrawn, and she is turned adrift to find a living for herself on "grazings."—*Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, 1928. P. 196.

In nearly every part of the country, the common grazing lands, and all grass lands close to villages, are hopelessly overstocked. This view was impressed upon us by many witnesses. Expressions such as "every village overstocked with herds of wretched starving cattle," "deplorably poor cattle," "weedy animals eating up food,"

were repeated with variations almost everywhere; and that these statements were true we had many opportunities of seeing for ourselves.—*Ibid.* P. 198.

This difference between the cattle owners of the East and West must be kept in mind in considering all suggestions for cattle improvement. Actions which in many countries have by tradition become reprehensible, and which by law would now render owners liable to prosecution, are here regarded in an entirely different light; the neglected state of a poor man's cattle may win for him his neighbour's sympathy in his misfortune, but evoke no criticism.—*Ibid.* P. 200.

Dogs we kick about and belabour with sticks, their ribs are seen sticking out, and yet we are not ashamed of ourselves and raise a hue and cry when a stray dog is killed.—GANDHI. *Young India*, November 4, 1926. P. 384.

LONELINESS

. . . The heart of even the most prosaic world ought to be chilled at the thought of "what man hath made of woman," in India.—Her Highness the Maharani Chimana Saheb Gaekwar of Baroda. *All-India Women's Conference on Educational Reform*, January 5-8, 1927. Poona. P. 22.

This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their peoples' situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned.

"Never forget the value of your letters—the value of the least little scraps of home-talk that you write. It's like meat to the starving—like water to the perishing of thirst, by the time it reaches my eyes. For—surely you realize—loneliness is the worst of this absorbing life. Not hard work, not difficulties and disappointments, not shortage of funds, though heaven knows all those are here—but just loneliness—sheer loneliness. Just the eternal lack of understanding on the part of those one lives to serve as to what it's all about."

Constance Carr, laying down her pen, sat for a moment staring out across the hospital compound. The rising sun, level-beamed, had filled it with brilliant shadow, through which, now and again, women-figures glided, silent, semi-translucent, as though not yet fully materialized from dreams. Sunrise light breeds illusions in India.

But the three low, tile-roofed bungalows that embrace the hospital compound were crowded with

human stuff about which no illusion was possible. Crowded with women and girl-children martyred to pain. Even the verandahs were crammed with cots. And Constance Carr, surgeon-in-charge during years past, had long since surrendered her last dream as to women of the Hindu world.

Long since, too, she had surrendered the habit of writing home about things as they are. The sordid materialism, the squalor, the selfishness, the cruelty endlessly feeding its victims into her hands that she might mend them only to be ruined again—could she as endlessly write home about that?

"Poor Constance is getting hipped!" they would say.

So, always pressed for time, often brain-weary from over-work, she had drifted into speaking of little save surface ripples in her brief home letters.

Today, however, she felt the rare impulse to unburden her mind. Again she turned to her writing, and the pen flew.

"Do you know what my pay is? 162 rupees a month ($54) and 15 off for pension. Do you know what I could make in private practice here?

Thousands, monthly—lots of 'em. You *do* know why I choose, nevertheless, to stick to my job; but do you think these Hindu women can believe it? Even Gandhi ascribes to us the same venal motives that he credits to Indian doctors. And only the other day, at a *purdah* party given by Mrs. Saratchandra Banerjea to the wives of the principal local magnates, I heard them estimate my loot. They were speaking in the vernacular and thought I did not understand.

" 'She must have laid up a fortune,' they agreed. 'Think of all the supplies that have passed through her hands in these long years!'

"But Mrs. Saratchandra Banerjea herself, by the way, is really a possible friend. She is the wife of the great political light. She has been to England with her husband. She has seen social life both there and on the Continent. She reads. I always fancy I could really talk to her, if I had the time, without fear of crashing on the rocks of misunderstanding. And that idea in itself has been a sort of comfort in reserve—the idea that if ever I must seek sympathy and help in the day's work, I may turn to her.

"Meantime, as to my troubles, many of them

are so routine that one is ashamed to mention them at all—it must seem so imbecile not to have found the way to conquer them long ago.

"Monkeys, for example. Yesterday, as I was working through my wards, a sudden bedlam of shrieks arose from the verandah, dominated by the agonized screams of one child. I dashed out, of course,—to see a great grey monkey fairly chewing a little girl-patient whose broken leg I had set the day before.

"It seems she had been eating a mango. The monkey, watching from the tree in the centre of our compound, had sprung down to snatch that mango. The child had tried to hide her treasure and the creature in its fury had given her a dozen bad bites before I could drive him off.

"Then, gibbering, scolding, he bounded away to the roof where others of his kind promptly joined him, and together, exactly like spiteful human beings they began wrenching loose our roof-tiles and flinging them down into the compound, where, with a horrible clatter, they broke into fragments.

"Now to you the latter performance may sound funny. But to me it is sheer tragedy. Because my operating room floor is so full of cracks and hol-

lows that I cannot keep it properly clean, because I had just managed, through months of planning and penny-pinching, to save enough money for a new floor, and because all that money must now be spent, at once, on repairing the roof, lest rain deluge the beds of the patients.

"'Why don't I shoot the monkeys?' you ask!

"Because monkeys, to Hindus, are holy. If I shot those monkeys I should destroy the good name of my hospital and make it a thing to be shunned as accursed. It is only either the lowest caste, or the relatively few individuals most advanced in ideas and education, that will consent to use a hospital even after all these years. In the interest of the future one dare do nothing that will frighten away our precious pioneers.

"Or, I will cite you another glimpse from the seamier side:

"One of our local Government officials, we will call him Mr. Ganapati Das, sent, a few days since, to engage a private room for his wife. As you know, we have private rooms for patients, with a connecting room, cook-room and yard for the attending members of the family, without whom no patient of position would be permitted by her family to come. The charge for the suite is one

rupee (thirty-four cents) a day. 'My wife seems to be ill,' Mr. Das had written. 'I should like her to receive treatment.'

"They brought her—a slip of a girl. They said she is fifteen years old. Maybe. She has never had a child. And the conditions that my examination revealed made clear the reason why. I—oh, well—I cleaned her up and sewed her together—the poor wee thing, as well as I could, and we put her to bed in her private room. Meanwhile, the old mother-in-law hovered about scolding.

" 'A whole rupee each day, and the price of the Doctor Miss Sahib's work beside! This miserable chit isn't worth it! Always ailing, always sick, and never giving us a child! Why will my son waste good money on such rubbish! The patience he has! A saint! Let her die and be out of the way, I say. But he won't have it so. The gods know why—unless this whining imp has caused a magic to be worked upon him. Oh, wait, just wait, till I get her home again!'

"That was the decenter part of the tune to which the child went under chloroform. But, after I had finished my work I gave the old woman a good, stiff piece of my mind; and, what with that and an appeal to her pity as strong as I knew

how to make, I believe I touched her somewhere, and that she will do her best for the patient—at least for the remainder of their stay here in hospital.

"You tell me you have people in England who extol the Hindu's beautiful thought. If only for one short day those people could see what I see —if only they could know what I know of the Hindu world around me! Somehow, 'beautiful thought' seems to have destroyed compassion at its very source.

"It was day before yesterday that I operated on that child. Yesterday afternoon, when I went in to see her, the entreaty in her face and the little movement of her hands showed that she wanted to speak to me alone. So I sent the old woman and the servants out of the room. Then the little creature whispered this:

" 'Can I be made able to bear my lord a child?'

"How could I say 'yes,' in view of the fact? In view of those great, desperate, demanding eyes how could I say 'no'?

"But she understood. And she put up her two little hands in prayer—prayer to me!—and she whispered again:

" 'Then, O Gracious and Strong One, here in

the peace of this good room, permit me now to die. The gods, it seems, have cursed me. My duty I cannot perform. Do not, then, send me back into useless torment, for indeed my soul and flesh can endure no more.'

"What could I promise? For by Hindu religious law that child is her husband's property, classed by Manu, their Moses, with cows, mares, she-camels, she-goats and ewes.

"She utterly belongs to him and just whenever he wants her he can pick her up, even out of the hospital bed, and take her home.

"So I tried, feebly enough, to invent some not-too-hopeless answer, and left her a sleeping-draught for the night.

"That was yesterday afternoon. The incident recurs to me today, not because of its rarity, for, alas! it is common, not rare; but because of the almost intolerable resentment one feels against cruelties one is powerless to stop.

"And now, here comes my morning tea. I'll drink it quickly and get away to my work. Make the most of this huge letter, my dear, for not soon again will you get from me another of such length!"

The morning had worn late before the busy

doctor, in her rounds, reached the private suite engaged by Mr. Ganapati Das. As she paused on the threshold, looking across at the little dark face on the pillow, something there written brought her forward with a stride.

For some moments she bent over the child, examining. Then, straightening up, she turned and looked at the mother-in-law, squatting with her attendants by the inner door.

The woman, staring blankly back, silent and unconcerned, spat a red mouthful of betel-juice against the wall.

"Come here!" ordered the doctor.

Grudgingly, the other rose and followed, out into the yard.

"Now, tell me"—Constance heard with a curious, detached approval the calm of her own voice—"tell me truly what has befallen that child in there, during the night past?"

"What should befall her, but that she slept?" the woman replied, defiant.

"Such talk is useless. You brought her here, badly damaged, for me to mend. I did what I could. Yesterday afternoon she was as I left her. Today she is an utter wreck—destroyed.—Just one thing could have done it. And you, who sleep

here at her door, you know what thing that was. *What man had access to your son's wife last night?*"

The Hindu's black eyes blazed sudden fire:

"Think not to pour shame on our house!" she screamed. "Who indeed should have access to my son's wife save my son, her lord, and who indeed should say him nay? He desired her. For his satisfaction I gave money to those who keep the gate. Last night he came—and at dawn departed. Trouble me no more. It is the hour of sleep."

As Constance went about her work of the next few hours, an idea, a hope, a plan, began to take shape in her mind. Early in the process she sent a message to Mrs. Saratchandra Banerjea, following it in person in the late afternoon.

"Curiously enough," she was presently saying, "it was only this morning that I used your name in writing to a friend at home. 'I feel,' I said, 'that Mrs. Banerjea is a comfort in reserve—that if ever I desperately need understanding help, I may turn to her. Now, unexpectedly soon, here I am, and with a story to tell.

"But, before I begin, I want to emphasize two things:

"The first is, that the painful incident that I am about to describe is not exceptional; parallel cases have occurred many times in my experience here; otherwise I should not bring it to you now.

"The second point is this: My purpose in coming to you is not to gossip, but to appeal for advice and help; not to shock you, but rather to beg your active interest and aid.

"Now, if I may, I will give you my illustrative case and after that my plan."

As Constance drove into her story, the Hindu lady listened, courteously attentive. But, from between the folds of her rich *sari*, her face looked out expressionless—innately aged, listless, weary, though yet unmarked by any inroad of advancing years. She sat erect upon an Empire sofa, all Aubusson and fresh gilt, one foot upon a small round Empire stool. Stiff and brilliant satin-covered chairs, new Axminster rugs, Regent Street photograph holders, screens and lamps, rococo German statuettes in pairs, small French mirrors in glittering frames, bright little objects of Belgian glass crowded the room—a room like false windows painted in detail on a dead brick wall; for at its back, behind closed door, lay the bare old Hindu house.

". . . and so, you see the old mother's point of view," Constance was concluding. "Her son desired access to his chattel; therefore . . ."

"But—forgive me—" Mrs. Banerjea interrupted, gently, in her all-but-perfect English. "I see, dear lady, that you do not understand. I, who have been so much in Europe—I, of course, grasp your point of view. But you of the West do not so easily enter into our thought. Our old religious culture, its poetry, its spirituality, its high, abstract devotion, seem to defy your efforts, however willing your sympathy.

"Now, as to this young wife, for whom you so kindly ask my pity, let me explain the case to you as it really is:

"To me—to any true Hindu—the girl is no object for pity, but rather of felicitation. Her husband at this time might easily have sought another; yet, for all her ailment, he still preferred her. If she is a good girl, she welcomed him thankfully, and now is proud and grateful to her kind lord that she was not neglected because of her distress."

It was close upon midnight when Constance turned toward her bed, the day's work done. And

there, on her table, her unfinished letter confronted her, awaiting its final word for the morning's post. A moment she stood over it, scanning the last page. Then seizing the pen, she scrawled:

"I finish as I began. Loneliness is the worst of it—sheer loneliness; because they don't, don't, don't understand."

Is a Hindu girl going to be protected by her husband being sent to jail? Can she, will she like to divorce him? Hindu children have much better ideals than that. The Hindu girl will not only say *"Raja va rajyahino va yo me bharta sa mê prabhuh,"* but also *"Sâdhurvâ yadi vasadhuh"* —"Prince or beggar, whoever has married me before the sacred fire, he is my Lord and my God," nay, "whether he be guilty or guiltless, he is my Lord." Send the husband to jail. If the wife be no social reform heroine, if she be a real Hindu girl, she will commit suicide the next day.—M. K. ACHARYA, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 8, 1928. P. 354.

. . . Before even the girl's body has reached real maturity, almost before she is aware that she has a soul of her own, she is made the plaything, either of a youth as sinned against as herself, or of a man who can neither respect her nor arouse her respect.—HER HIGHNESS THE MAHARANI CHIMANA SAHEB GAEKWAR OF BARODA. *All-India*

Women's Conference on Educational Reform, January 5-8, 1927. Poona. P. 16.

Every evil custom entrenches itself in this country behind religion and secures support as a religious custom.—M. R. Ry. T. A. Ramalingam Chattiar, Avl., B.A., B.L. *Opinions on the Hindu Child Marriage Bill*, Government of India, Paper No. 1, 1928. P. 4.

Of course, if through good fortune a woman is married to a man of kind disposition she may never suffer from these injustices; but, otherwise, she is indeed in a very helpless and hopeless position.—Bhagat Ram. *The Position of Women in Hinduism and Vedicism*, Ferozepur, 1928. P. 4.

The nonsense about the wonderful purity and spirituality of the Hindu marriage ideal cannot survive examination; still less can the sex-obsession of the civilization and the social system which, in making one sex the unpitied servant of the other, drains and destroys both. If the matter is brought to the political test, which—not unnaturally—is what appeals most to educated Indians today, then we may say this: they have friends who gladly acknowledge their complete right to

self-determination, yet cannot see what *use* freedom can be to them until the whole of their sex-thinking has been ruthlessly overhauled and the plain conclusions of reason and justice put in practise.—EDWARD THOMPSON, *Suttee.* London. George Allen and Unwin, 1928. P. 143.

TO THE WOMEN OF HINDU INDIA

Practical efforts are essential to the achievement of our object. Most of the meetings and conferences in India do not go beyond the mere expressions of pious hopes. They are the scenes of some very interesting discussions, and of the passing of some very fine resolutions, but there the whole thing comes to an end. That, in fact, is one of the reasons that in spite of the efforts of the last fifty years women's education in India is still in its preliminary stages.—HER HIGHNESS THE BEGUM SAHEB OF BHOPAL, Opening Speech at Second All-Indian Woman's Conference on Education, Delhi, February, 1928.

TO THE WOMEN OF HINDU INDIA

By the title of an earlier book some of you have been offended. *Mother India*, you say, is to you and yours a sacred figure—the embodiment of your Hindu race-loyalty, your Hindu race-idealism; and its name has now been rudely affixed to a bald statement of your Hindu cultural defects.

That title was chosen with an object. Its purpose was to awaken your intelligent patriotism and the consciences of your men, by making inescapable the contrast between, on the one hand, florid talk of devotion and "sacrifice" poured out before an abstract figure, and, on the other hand, the consideration actually accorded to the living woman, mother of the race.

Today no people can occupy, in the eyes of the world, a status higher than it accords to its women. And no people, in our modern society of nations, can successfully adduce theories instead of practice, when on trial before the bar of public opinion.

Let your ancient sacred scriptures say what they may, not by them and their beauty, but by its pres-

ent working out upon your bodies and minds will your code be judged.

Your culture, it is true, is under no necessity to satisfy our Western judgment. But until it satisfies that judgment in what we consider essential points of common humanity, it must do without our respect. Until you change the facts, therefore, the verdict cannot be different.

Few would presume to offer our Western performance as a model for you to copy. The liberty afforded to American women, for example, is as great as is your thraldom; but, although the large majority of American women honour that liberty as a commitment loyally to serve the family and the society of which they are a part, some neglect the privilege, and some selfishly, thoughtlessly and flagrantly abuse it. Of these last you chiefly hear.

Out of the subjection in which for ages you have lived, you have drawn one great prize. You have been disciplined. Discipline gives mental and moral strength. That strength you now possess far in excess of your men. That strength you must now use, in your men's behalf.

Somehow you must find courage to break through—to win a new light, a new law. To your

keeping, throughout the decisive first years of life, are entrusted the boys, the future manhood, of Hindu India. You, the mothers, must ground them, during those first years, in that cleanness, that justice, that true chivalry toward women without which no people can increase in stature.

In a society of whom ninety per cent are village-dwellers; in a society where, for all their flowers of speech, men hold women in respect so slight that few, in the strength of their youth, save they be specially protected, dare undertake to serve the village weal as teacher or as sick-nurse—in a society so minded you have a revolution to accomplish before you can do your work for your race.

But have you not long enough left your waiting task to foreigners in your land; to a handful from your little handful of Brahmo Samajists; above all to Christian converts chiefly drawn from the ranks of those very Untouchables whom you have so pitilessly scorned?

I speak as to the Hindu women of India, well knowing that scarcely two per cent of you, because of your ancient code's inhibitions, are able to read the written word in any of your multitudes of dialects or tongues:

Your illiterates are too numerous, too wide-

spread and scattered, too segregated to be taught without your aid. In your two per cent, therefore —in you who have achieved some degree of education, lies the hope of the rest.

One there was—and she no legendary goddess, but a living woman of modern days, who, out of sheer nobility of spirit, shook off the trammels of the centuries and gave her all to the service of Hindu womankind. Pandita Ramabai, herself a widow and a Brahman, burned with a devotion so real that it consumed all pettiness of racial pride, driving her to set aside pretence and to cast her cause in honest nakedness before the eyes of the world, demanding abroad the help refused at home.

Addressing America, she said: [1]

> The great majority of my country-people being most bitterly opposed to the education of women, there is little hope of my getting from them either good words or pecuniary aid. For the present it is useless to reason with high-caste Hindu gentlemen concerning this matter; they only ridicule the proposal or silently ignore it. . . . Mothers and fathers, compare the con-

[1] *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati. Philadelphia, 1888. P. 116.

dition of your own sweet darlings at your happy firesides with that of millions of little girls of corresponding age in India, who have already been sacrificed on the unholy altar of an inhuman social custom, and then ask yourselves whether you can stop short of doing something to rescue the little widows from the hands of their tormentors. Millions of heart-rending cries are daily rising from within the strong walls of Indian Zenanas; thousands of child-widows are annually dying without a ray of hope to cheer their hearts, and other thousands are being daily crushed under a fearful weight of sin and shame, with no one to prevent their ruin by providing for them a better way. Will not you [of America] think of these my country women, and rise, moved by a common impulse, to free them from life-long slavery and infernal misery? I beg you . . . all who have any interest in or compassion for your fellow-creatures, let the cry of India's daughters, feeble though they be, reach your ears and stir your hearts.

So wrote this valiant Indian woman, and, herself having crossed the seas to reinforce her plea, returned to hard labour in India. That was forty

years since. But at the hour of her death only six years ago, her voice amongst you was still but a crying in the wilderness, and its material support had still to be sought overseas.

Pandita Ramabai began her work a half-century ago, vigorously continuing it until her death in 1922. Yet in all that time her example produced so few emulators, seemingly, that Mr. Gandhi, searching his horizon only two years since for an Indian woman practically championing women, raised this desolate cry: [2]

> "There is no power of resistance left" in the women of India "to fight against any evil whatever." No doubt man is primarily responsible for this state of things. But may women always throw the blame on men and salve their consciences? Do the enlightened among them not owe it to their sex as also to men whose mothers they are to take up the burden of reform? What is all this education worth that they are receiving if on marriage they are to become mere dolls for their husbands and prematurely engaged in the task of rearing would-be manikins? They may fight if they like, for votes for

[2] *Young India*, October 7, 1926. P. 349.

women. It costs neither time nor trouble. It provides them with innocent recreation. But where are the brave women who work among the girl-wives and girl-widows and who would take no rest and leave none for men, till girl-marriage became an impossibility, and till every girl feels in herself strength enough to refuse to be married except when she is of full age and to the person about whom she is given final choice?

For the truth of Mr. Gandhi's indictment, in so far as it may be true, no justice, no equity can hold the overwhelming dumb majority of Hindu women to blame. Their long centuries of oppression absolve them. But as to you others—you favoured few—once you perceive in the very reluctance of the great orthodox majority of Hindu men to break their women's bonds and give them light—once you recognize in that very reluctance your men's own desperate need, your battle is half won.

Why?

Because, for centuries past your natural intelligence, sagacity and devotion have been acclaimed, while instances of your personal courage have at

times amazed the world. Your mothers mounted the funeral pyre to serve their dead lords. You daughters, once you hear the call, will face more protracted suffering, if that must be, to save your sons.

Yet beware!

Beware of wasting in pretty puffs of vapour the steam-head that should force you forward; beware of exhausting in fine convention speeches, high-sounding "resolutions," and ineffective legislation your dynamic will to win.

Beware of hiding behind your climate, as an excuse for lassitude. It is the only climate you have. Will you let it beat you down, where Ramabai could triumph over it?

And again: Beware of pleading political tutelage and the poverty of your country as an excuse for deflecting, deferring or failing to concentrate your effort on the field of social reform.

Never, never will you have steadier and clearer-eyed men, never will you see your India standing upright and free on her own feet, till you women of the Hindu world insure to your manhood of tomorrow not better, more loving, or more devoted, but wiser, stronger, more enlightened mothers.

Emissaries come to us from your country on one pretext or another indignantly to deny your sufferings, eloquently to glorify the cruel cult under which you have been crushed, and, babbling of politics, of philosophies, of word-wrapped legendary things, labour to beguile our eyes from the magnitude of your battle, and the true roots of your peoples' woes. These emissaries deceive some. But in the main they serve only to delay understanding friendship between us and to discourage such help as we might otherwise be privileged to give.

Others, again, ask praise for such efforts at social reform as your men have made, whether in your behalf or in behalf of the multitudinous other victims of their system. The bare fact is that, compared with the size, the numbers, the means and the needs of your great Hindu India, such efforts are still so few, so slight, so infinitesimal in scope and effect, that to praise your men for their existence or extent were to be guilty of an implied condescension that, if offered, they ought keenly to resent.

The twelve little narratives that make this book are records of fact. Perhaps few or none of you can, from your own experience or observation,

parallel them all; for few of you are acquainted with more than one section of your country. But not one record will fail of recognition in its own part and social division of Hindu India.

Do not waste energy in anger against them, however natural that anger may be. In all probability your help, yet awhile, must come from the West. And the West must know your need, in order that it may help you according to your need. Those are no friends of yours, whether of West or East, whether lay or cleric, who would lead you to evade or resist our scrutiny, as though it were hostile or sneering. Those are no friends of yours who, to spare your men's "sensitiveness," would always conceal with roses the shackles and the sores that are killing you, and through you, your men.

Meantime, America receives with hearty applause those reports of Indian women's budding efforts at social self-help that of late months have come through to us in steadily increasing volume. In measure as you labour now to turn your spirit from passive endurance to the active creation of a strong, just and chivalrous people you have our utmost sympathy and admiration.

Let us of the West, then, be your friends, with frankness and with honesty, and not with a veil of

deception between us. We believe that nothing good is hurt, while much evil is cured, by the broad light of the sun.

Sympathy won by misrepresentation is little worth. Let us have mutual truth. Its wounds are honourable and make, in the end, for mutual respect. We have each our weaknesses, each our strengths. Let us know and help each other.

There is one remark of Mr. M. K. Reddy, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, which was based on a complete misapprehension. Mr. Reddy referred to the truth of much that was contained in Miss Mayo's "much-maligned book." The resentment provoked by the book *is not due to the truth or otherwise of the facts stated in it,*[1] but to the broad inferences reflecting on the Indian and particularly the Hindu race and religion.—*Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay. K. Natarajan, Editor. Editorial, December 1, 1928, on the first South Indian Social Reform Conference, held in Madras, November, 1928.

What is necessary for [India's] awakening? In the first instance, true sincerity and the capacity to look our failings frankly in the face; and in the second instance, the passion of discontent which must arise from such a clear-sighted vision. And after this must come the resolute endeavour, at all costs, to set our house in order and, whenever

[1] The original is not italicized.

necessary, to set present needs above old restrictions. The time for dragging a lengthening chain is over. We must awake to the shame of having sides to our daily life, which we cannot exhibit to the coolly appraising eye of the outsider. We must recognise how futile it is to seek to cover these up with words, when the eye of the World-Spirit is all the time calmly regarding them and judging us in their light. In short, we have got to bring our India back into harmony with Reality. And only when we have begun to do this, and mean to go on doing it, can her true Liberation come.—KRISHNAMURTI. "Message to India," *New India*, March 22, 1928. P. 7.

But the strangest thing is that, in spite of the existence of so many evils amongst us, most of our speakers and newspapers are still trying to suppress the real situation of the masses as well as of poor woman-folk in India, in order that the outside world may not know of the weak points of our social system.—BHAGAT RAM. *The Position of Women in Hinduism and Vedicism*, Ferozepur, 1928. P. 4.

. . . Unless men and women of India make up their minds definitely to get rid of these evils

from amongst them, a thousand laws in the statute book would not eradicate them. No amount of legislative reform could come to their rescue, if they were not sincere and honest enough to work for the wiping out of the evils, which were eating into the vitals of the Hindu society.—MRS. BRIJLAL NEHRU, Member of the Age of Consent Committee. Speech reported in *The Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay. December 1, 1928.

. . . Our men are complaisantly contented and satisfied with the position of women and, while adoring the ideals of womanhood in the past . . . we close our eyes to the abasement of our women in the present and have no thought of their future. This worship of our ancient laws has made us blind to our present shortcomings, apathetic to woman's future destiny. Woman has no legal status; she has no property rights, she has no independence. She is a perpetual slave—dependent on her parents during infancy, on her husband during youth, and on her sons during old age. How can we expect our nation to progress if we treat our women like household goods and chattels?"—SIR MANUBHAI MEHTA, Prime Minister of the State of Bikaner.

Speech at Rajgarh, Bikaner. Reported in Calcutta [Weekly] *Statesman*, September 13, 1928.

You may get the finest constitution that is conceivable dropping upon you from the House of Commons. It will be worthless if there are not men and women fit enough to work that constitution.—GANDHI. *Young India*, September 15, 1927.

OPINIONS OF HINDU INDIA TODAY

In reading the following statements, representative of many of the same tenor made *within the past two years*, by Hindu leaders, in India, to audiences of their own degree and kind, we may usefully bear in mind an allegation of late frequently urged upon us of the West—the allegation that the Hindu child marriage is a betrothal ceremony only, consummation being deferred for some years, and until the prospective mother has attained a safe age.

OPINIONS OF HINDU INDIA TODAY

ON THE PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE AMONG HINDUS

. . . in India the early marriages are confined mostly to what are known in the Hindu community as the "higher castes."—LALA LAJPAT RAI, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4419.

I wish to inform the House that our humblest fellow-subjects or the so-called depressed classes are the largest victims to this evil of early marriages.—PANDIT MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4445.

Nowadays even among these communities which are in a lower social scale the custom of early marriages is being practiced. This is one of the things which the backward and the depressed classes people are learning from the higher classes.—MR. R. NAGAN GOWDA. *Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council*, March 27, 1928. P. 38.

The difficulty of securing a suitable bridegroom is very great among Brahmins. . . . If the marriage is not celebrated when a suitable bridegroom is available, he may not be available when the girl attains the age of eleven or twelve.—DEWAN BAHADUR T. R. RAMACHANDRA AYYAR, AVL. *Paper No. 1, Opinions on the Hindu Child Marriage Bill*, Government of India, Legislative Department, February 4, 1928.

It would not be gainsaid that, whatever may be the reformer's view of the change, the vast majority of those who reside in villages and have not come under the influence of western civilization and thought, have long clung to this system of pre-puberty marriage as part of their religion and feel that if they get their daughters married after puberty they will be committing a sin.—C. V. KRISHNASWAMI AYYAR. *Stri-Dharma*, Madras, July, 1928. P. 154.

Mr. Sudharsilal Jaini, president of the Jain Sabha [Association] of Aligarh, United Provinces, told the [Age of Consent] Committee that in his community the marriage of a girl took place before the age of twelve. . . . If she were not married at that age, there was danger of her be-

coming a bad character.—Calcutta [Weekly] *Statesman*, October 11, 1928.

In certain classes, especially the non-educated Bania [trader and money lender] class, the practice of performing marriages even before puberty was common. As the result of this there were many evils of a serious nature. Consumption and hysteria were very common diseases among girls who married before reaching puberty. Consummation of early marriages was responsible for these diseases. —Testimony of Dr. G. T. Hingorani. Age of Consent Committee, Karachi Hearing, September 29, 1928. *Indian Social Reformer*, October 13, 1928. P. 103.

The custom of child marriage has taken such a deep root in our country, that despite the fact that its evils are such as should be evident to the least thinking man and that many of our thoughtful leaders are crying themselves hoarse to impress upon us how our political slavery is in a great measure due to it, the custom shows no appreciable signs of decay.—Dr. N. S. Phadke, of Rajaram College, Kolhapur. *Sex Problem in India*, with a Foreword by Margaret Sanger, Taraporevala, Sons & Co., Bombay, 1927. P. 72.

In spite of the abolition of early marriage being advocated in the Press and on platforms by the various social and quasi-religious organizations, we see that we have not been able to kill this evil. It has rather increased in spite of all our efforts during these decades than decreased.—KUMAR GANGANAND SINHA. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4413.

As for social reform work and the education of the public, we have been doing educative propaganda work all these fifty or sixty years and still the progress is very little. I have now figures on hand to show that early marriages are rather on the increase throughout India.—DR. (MRS.) S. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDI. *Proceedings Madras Legislative Council*, March 27, 1928. P. 43.

Among Hindus marriage is a religious sacrament. It is one of the Samskaras. Rules laid down in regard to the Samskaras govern the community. It is most undesirable that the Government should legislate in the matter, as, among other things, it is in contravention to their undertaking not to interfere in religious matters. . . .

Is it not, after all, the distinctive mode of life, ideals and customs that lead up to the ideals that

constitute Hinduism, and are responsible for the greatness attained by the nation in the past? How can any self-respecting Hindu condemn the ideals and customs his nation has been observing up till now from time immemorial? . . .

Marriage of girls before puberty and age of 12 is a religious custom obtaining in practice from time immemorial. Exceptions, if any, only prove the rule. Alien modes of thinking can never get to the purposes at the root of customs.—MR. J. MANJIAH, of the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, *Bombay Daily Mail*, July 16, 1928.

Madras, 3rd March '28. The following telegram has been sent to His Excellency the Viceroy by the Sri Karyam of the Ahobila Mutt, one of the oldest religious institutions of South India:—

"His Holiness the Jeer of Ahobila Mutt hears with great concern of measure in Legislative Assembly imposing restriction on Hindus regarding marriageable age. This aims at subversion of religious rights of Hindus, particularly Brahmins. His Holiness considers this unwarranted and mischievous and thinks it will be attended with grave social dangers. His Holiness protests against interference by those not qualified to legislate on

our behalf and prays His Excellency to interfere and disallow the measure."—Published, together with other protests from religious heads, by T. S. NATESA SASTRIAR, "Valmiki," Mayavaram. Vasanpha Press, Mayavaram, South India.

The legal maxim that whatever the Sovereign permits he commands correctly reproduces the popular feeling that since marriages are lawful with girls under 13, co-habitation with them must be lawful too since the idea of marriage without co-habitation is a Tolstoyan fancy beyond the understanding of the average man.—*Indian Social Reformer*. K. Natarajan, Editor. Bombay. Editorial, July 21, 1928. P. 743.

. . . pre-puberty marriages and consummation soon after are almost universal in India. The evil is thus widespread; it is extensive so far as the nation is concerned; it is intensive within each Hindu family. Let us compare this with Suttee. Suttees . . . shocked by their individual enormity, by the intense agony of the burning wife. . . . But, . . . the agony ended with the martyr. . . . On the other hand, the evil of early motherhood affects a very large percentage of the womanhood of India, and is so insidious in all the manifold ramifications of social life that we have ceased to think of its shocking results to the entire framework of our society. In one case its naked hideousness shocks the conscience; in the other the familiarity of the evil blinds us to its ghastly results. If the evil of Suttee is as one, a hundred thousandfold is the evil of early motherhood.—HER HIGHNESS THE RANI SAHEB OF SANGLI. "The Child Marriage Bill," *Stri-Dharma*, September, 1928.

. . . child marriage . . . implies cohabitation at an immature age, sometimes even before puberty, and practically always on the first signs of puberty. . . .—KUMAR GANGANAND SINHA, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4413.

. . . consummation of marriage [does] not take usually place before puberty, but soon after puberty, and a little before the age of 13.—Testimony of Mrs. Bhat, Lady Superintendent of the Seva Sadan, Poona. Age of Consent Committee, Poona Hearing, *Times of India*, November 5, 1928.

Chairman [Sir Moropant Joshi]: What do you think of the general age of consummation amongst the Gujeratis? Is it below 13?

Witness [Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta, representing the Bombay Municipal Corporation]: . . . After the girl attains puberty, whatever her age, consummation takes place.—Age of Consent Committee, Bombay Hearing, *Bombay Daily Mail*, October 25, 1928.

Mrs. Arunadevi, giving evidence, stated that . . . out of 28,000 marriages that had been con-

summated nearly 22,500 were cases in which the first child was born when the wife was below 13 years of age.—Evidence of Mrs. Arunadevi Mukerjea, who assisted her husband in taking the Baroda Census. Age of Consent Committee, Ahmedabad Hearing. *Indian Social Reformer*, November 10, 1928. Pp. 170-1. *Bombay Daily Mail*, October 20, 1928.

. . . 80 per cent of cases of cohabitation occur in Rajputana before the attainment of puberty by the girl. This was due to child marriage.—Testimony of Kunwar Chand Karan Sarda, secretary of the Ajmer Hindu Sabha, Age of Consent Committee, Delhi Hearing. *Indian Social Reformer*, November 10, 1928. P. 169.

Chairman [Sir Moropant Joshi]: Has the amendment of 1925 raising the age of consent to 13 years been effective in protecting married girls against cohabitation with husbands within the prescribed age limit?

Witness [Dr. Jadavji Hansraj, President of the Bhatia Mitra Mandal]: No. Whenever girls below 13 have been married, it is only rare that the consummation of marriage is postponed till they attain that age.—Age of Consent Committee, Bom-

bay Hearing. *Indian Social Reformer*, November 24, 1928. P. 201.

The law of the age of consent,[1] so far as marital relations are concerned, is a dead letter. . . . —RAI SAHIB HARBILAS SARDA, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Simla, September 15, 1927. P. 4408.

Premature cohabitation follows early marriage with an inevitable sequence. And with equally inevitable and cruel sequence cohabitation is followed by conception.—DR. N. S. PHADKE. *Sex Problem in India*, Bombay, 1927. Pp. 100-01.

Sometimes the girl is made to live with her husband even before the first menses appears. I can bring to memory many such cases. . . . Except in a few and educated and well-to-do families a few months after the girl attains puberty the husband's people demand the girl. . . . Sometimes her husband is 50 or 60.—DR. [MRS.] S. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDI. *Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council*, March 27, 1928. P. 31.

[1] By Act XXIX of 1925 the age of consent within the marriage bond was raised to thirteen.

THE EFFECT OF CONSUMMATED CHILD MARRIAGE

I may safely say that all intelligent people are of opinion that the Hindu community will be a dying race if they do not stop child marriages and early consummation of marriages.—LALA LAJPAT RAI. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, February 9, 1928. Pp. 259-60.

Sir, I submit that the Hindu race is dying and one of the causes responsible for our slow decay is early marriage. . . . We know the harm that the practice has done. We know the havoc it has created. What are we today? We are feeble and weak, not morally but certainly physically, because of this early marriage.—MUNSHI ISWAR SARAN. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. Pp. 4446-7.

Look at it [child marriage] as a source of increasing the number of young widows who cannot remarry . . . ; look at it from the point of view of the death of child mothers who conceive at a tender age and bring forth sickly babies; look at

it from the point of view of child mortality of which child parentage is a potent cause, and I am sure you will say that you must root out the evil at all costs. It is sapping the vitals of our race and to let this continue is to commit racial suicide.—KUMAR GANGANAND SINHA. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4412.

What glory, what culture, what boast of civilization, what mutual happiness between the husband and wife and what beauty of womanhood could there be in a system that makes tender children of 12, 13 and 14 with undeveloped bones, tender muscles, weak nerves and immature generative organs to undergo the severe ordeal of wifehood and motherhood . . . ending in abortions and miscarriages which Brahmin girls seldom escape. . . . I will particularly emphasize the painful fact that too frequent conceptions ending in abortions and miscarriages is a very common complaint among Brahmin patients of mine and in the course of even one year they go through three or four abortions.—DR. [MRS.] S. M. REDDI. *Madras Mail*, February 23, 1928.

. . . he who runs may see that the debility, the weakness of the Indian people, is due to these

early marriages and early motherhood. The life of the people, according to the insurance statistics, is not even half of what it is in England and other European countries. . . . One reason is the pernicious habit of early marriages and early cohabitation which is sapping the manhood and the womanhood of this country. It is an evil . . . which cannot be described as anything but a national calamity.—SIR HARI SINGH GOUR. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, February 9, 1928. P. 255.

So long as these evils exist in this country, we will neither have the strength of arm nor the strength of character to win freedom.—RAI SAHIB HARBILAS SARDA. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 15, 1927. P. 4407.

No more efficacious and sure means than child marriage could have been devised for the production of an unfit race.—DR. N. S. PHADKE, *Sex Problem in India*, Bombay, 1927. P. 73.

Child marriage has indeed been in every way the root-cause of most of the evils from which our country is labouring, the tubercular germ growing on the body social and politic, the white-ant fast eating into the once healthy wood. And unless it

is eradicated utterly and promptly, there is no hope of advancement for our womanhood or regeneration for the nation as a whole.—MRS. PARVATI CHANDRASEKHARA AIYAR, first woman member of the Bangalore District Council. *Stri-Dharma*, August, 1927. P. 149.

Mrs. Aparna Devi (daughter of Desabandhu C. R. Das) spoke [at the All-India Women's Social Conference, Calcutta, December, 1928] on the evil effects of child marriage and dowry. "We are a dying race, and unless we are prepared to stem the gathering downrush of Hindu society by something strong and tangible, we should soon sink into oblivion, and only become fit to be preserved in museums like the mummies of Egypt, in air-tight glass cases."—*Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay, January 5, 1929. P. 298.

People seem to think, that when a law is passed against any evil, it will die without any further effort. There never was a grosser self-deception. —GANDHI. *Young India*, July 7, 1927. P. 219.

NOTES

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DADABHOY, SIR MANECKJI BYRAMJEE, C.I.E., K.C.I.E. Member Viceroy's Legislative Council, 1908-12, 1914-17. A Governor of Imperial Bank of India. Member Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance. Publications: *Commentary on the Land Laws of the Central Provinces. Commentary on the Central Provinces Tenancy Act.*

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DEVI, MRS. APARNA, daughter of the late Hindu political leader, Desabandhu C. R. Das.

FRAZER, SIR J. G., D.C.L., LL.D., Litt.D. Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Liverpool, etc., etc. Author of *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan, 12 vols., London, 1887-1915.

GANDHI, MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND. President of Indian National Congress, 1925. Editor of *Young India.*

GARRATT, G. T. A retired member of the Indian Civil Service. Author of *An Indian Commentary*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1928.

GOUR, SIR HARI SINGH. Barrister-at-law. President Municipal Committee, Nagpur; First Vice-Chancellor, and Hon. D.Litt., Delhi University. Member of the All-India Legislative Assembly from Central Provinces, Hindi Divisions. Publications: *Law of Transfer in British India*, 3 vols. *Penal Law of British India*, 2 vols. *Hindu Code.*

GOWDA, R. NAGAN. Member of the Madras Legislative Council.

HANSRAJ, DR. JADAVJI. President of the Bhatia Mitra Mandal, Bombay.

The Hindu Mahasabha, Annual General Hindu Convention, resolution of, 1928.

His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal Muth Kumnakonam. Head of "The Premier Religious Institution representing orthodox Hindu India."

His Holiness the Jeer of Ahobila Mutt. Head of one of the oldest Hindu religious institutions in South India.

The Indian Social Reformer, Bombay. Editor: K. Natarajan. An Indian-owned and edited weekly paper.

The Indian Witness, Lucknow. Official organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Southern Asia. Editor: J. Waskom Pickett.

Jaini, Sudharsilal. President of the Jain Sabha of Aligarh, United Provinces.

Krishnamurti, J. Introduced to the West by Mrs. Annie Besant.

Legislative Assembly Debates. The official records of the debates in the lower house of the All-India Parliament.

Madras Mail. A British-owned and edited daily newspaper.

Madras, Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of. Official reports of the debates taking place in the Madras Legislature.

Malaviya, Pandit Madan Mohan. Member, Provincial Legislative Council, 1902-12; President of Indian National Congress, 1909 and 1918; Member, Imperial Legislative Council, 1910-1919, etc.; Vice-Chancellor, Benares Hindu University since

1919; President, Hindu Mahasabha, 1923-24. Member of the All-India Legislative Assembly from Allahabad and Jhansi Division.

MANJIAH, J. Of the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, India.

MEHTA, JAMNADAS, M. Represented the Bombay Municipal Corporation before the Age of Consent Committee in October, 1928.

MEHTA, SIR MANUBHAI NANDSHANKAR, C.S.I., M.A., LL.B. Prime Minister to H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda, 1916-1927; Prime Minister to H. H. the Maharajah of Bikaner since 1927. Publications: *The Hind Rajasithan*; *Principles of Law of Evidence*, 3 vols.

MUKERJEA, MRS. ARUNADEVI. Assisted her husband in taking the Baroda Census.

NAIK, P. G. Of the Bombay Social Service League.

NATARAJAN, KAMAKSHI. Editor, *The Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay. President of the Indian National Social Conference, Madras, 1928.

OBEROI, THE HONORABLE SARDAR SHIVDEV SINGH, OF THE PUNJAB. Member of the Council of State, Government of India.

Opinions on the Hindu Child Marriage Bill. Paper No. 1, Government of India, Legislative Department, published February, 1928. This paper gives the opinions of leaders throughout India on the advisability of regulating Hindu marriages. Its contents were elicited by the circulation of the Sarda Child Marriage Bill for opinions.

PANDIT, R. P. Assistant Commissioner of Belgaum.

PHADKE, DR. N. S. Professor of Mental and Moral

Philosophy, Rajaram College, Kolhapur. Author of *Sex Problems in India*, with a foreword by Margaret Sanger.

The Pioneer, Allahabad. A British-owned and edited daily newspaper.

RAI, LALA LAJPAT. Member of the All-India Legislature, from the Jullundur Division. Publications: *The Political Future of India*, *The Problem of National Education in India*, *Unhappy India*, etc.

RAJAGOPAL, R. Writer in the *Audi Dravida Guardian*.

RAJAH, RAO BAHADUR, M. C. Fellow of the Madras University; Superintendent, Wesley College Lower School; President Second South Indian Adi Dravida Congress; Honorary Secretary Madras Adi Dravida Maha Jana Saba; Honorary Presidency Magistrate; Member of the All-India Legislative Assembly. Author of *The Oppressed Hindus*.

RAMABAI, PANDITA SARASVATI. Hindu social reformer, devoted to the cause of high-caste Hindu women, and in especial, of widows of that status. Author of *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, Philadelphia, 1888.

RAM, BHAGAT. Of Ferozepur, Punjab. Independent Hindu social reform pioneer. Working for the betterment of the condition of Hindu women and children, of outcasts and dumb animals.

RAU, R. L. Contributor to *Stri-Dharma*.

REDDI, MUTHULAKSHMI, DR. (MRS.). The first lady to sit in an Indian legislature. Has been elected to the responsible post of Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council. She is a successful medical practitioner in Madras and a devoted social worker.

SANGLI, HER HIGHNESS THE RANI SAHEB OF. Wife of the ruling Prince of Sangli, of the Southern Maratha country.

SARAN, MUNSHI ISWAR. Member of the All-India Legislative Assembly from the Lucknow Division.

SARDA, KUNWAR CHAND KARAN. Secretary of the Ajmer Hindu Sabha.

SARDA, RAI SAHIB HARBILAS. Member of the All-India Legislative Assembly from Ajmer-Merwara; proponent in 1927 of the Bill to Regulate Marriages of Children Amongst the Hindus.

SASTRIAR, BRAHMASRI I. S. NATESA. Brahman lecturer and writer, Mayavaram, South India.

SASTRY, N. YAGNESVARA. Writer in *Stri-Dharma.*

SINHA, KUMAR GANGANAND. Hon. Research Scholar of Calcutta University. Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, etc. A founder of the Nationalist Party in the Legislative Assembly. President of the Purnea Hindu Sabha. Member of Executive Committee of the All-India Hindu Sabha. Member of the All-India Legislature from Bhagalpur, Purnea and the Santhal Parganas. Published *The Place of Videha in the Ancient and the Mediaeval India*, and other papers.

The Statesman, Calcutta. A British-owned daily newspaper, with a weekly edition.

Stri-Dharma, Madras. Official organ of the Women's Indian Association. President, Dr. Annie Besant. Editor, Mrs. Malati Patwardhan.

SUKTHANKAR, DR. (MRS.) MALINI B. Honorary Physician for Children, Cama and Albless Hospitals.

THOMPSON, EDWARD JOHN, PH.D. Lecturer in Bengali, Oxford University. Author: *Suttee*, etc.

The Times of India, Bombay. A British-owned and edited daily newspaper.

TRAVANCORE, HER HIGHNESS THE JUNIOR MAHARANI, mother of the Maharajah, who is a minor.

TRAVANCORE, HER HIGHNESS THE MAHARANI SETU LAKSHMI BAYI, the present ruler of the State. Aunt of the Maharajah, who is still a minor.

UNTOUCHABLE ASSOCIATION OF JULLUNDUR, Petition of the, to the Simon Commission, 1918.

WHITEHEAD, RT. REV. HENRY, D.D. Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, 1883-99; Superior of the Oxford Mission, Calcutta, 1890-99; Bishop of Madras, 1899-1922; Hon. Fellow, Trinity College, Oxford, 1920. Publications: *The Village Gods of South India*, 1916; *Indian Problems in Religion, Education, Politics*, 1924; *The Outcaste of India and the Gospel of Christ*, 1927, etc.

Young India, Ahmedabad. A weekly journal edited by M. K. Gandhi.